



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

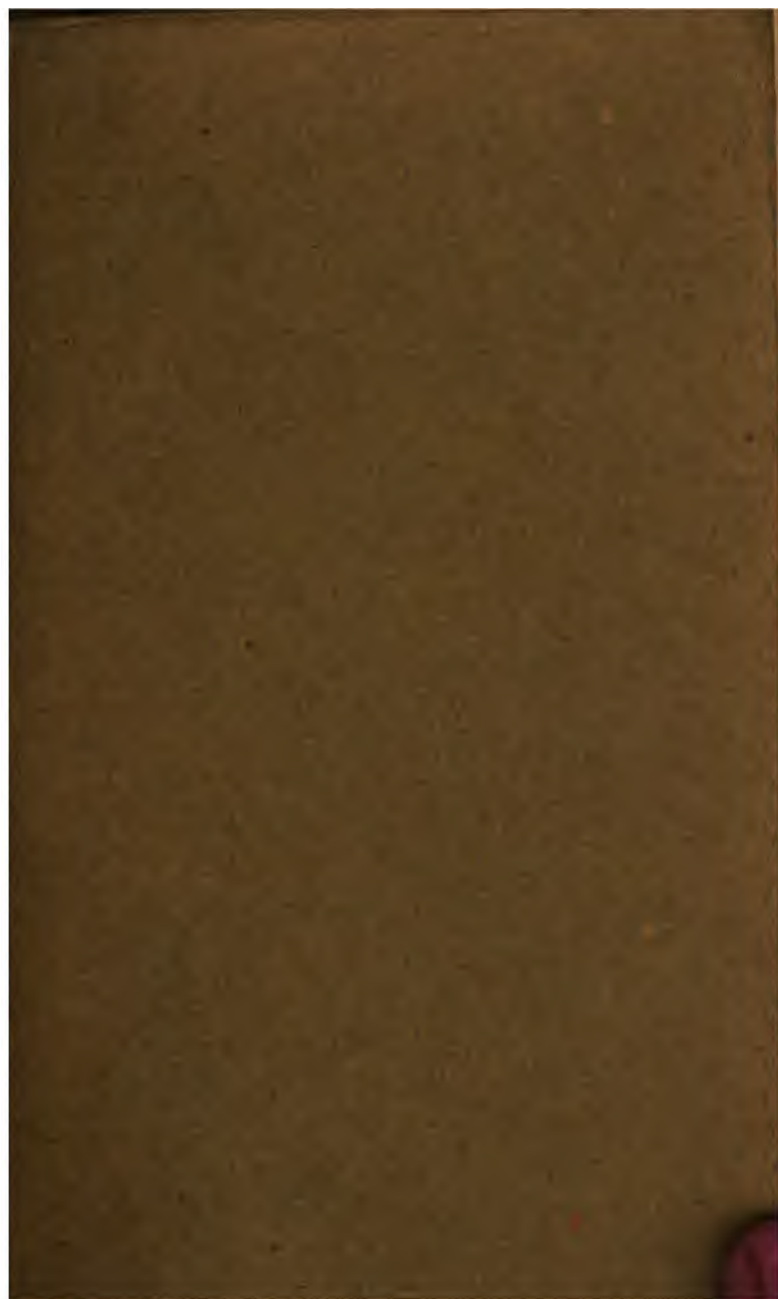
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





William, Duke of Bedford.

Endsleigh.



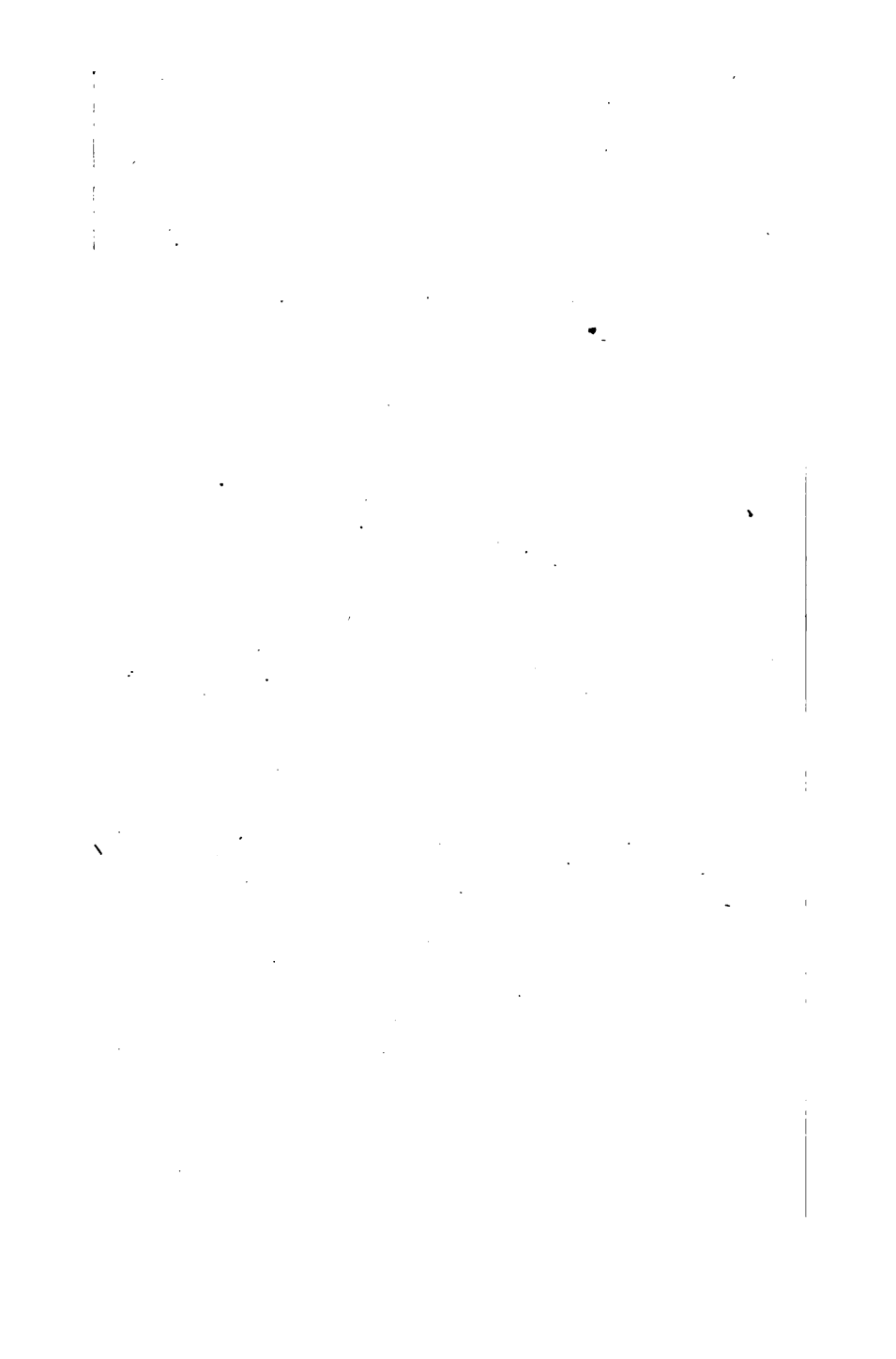
*

$$256 \text{ e. } 17071$$

$$2$$



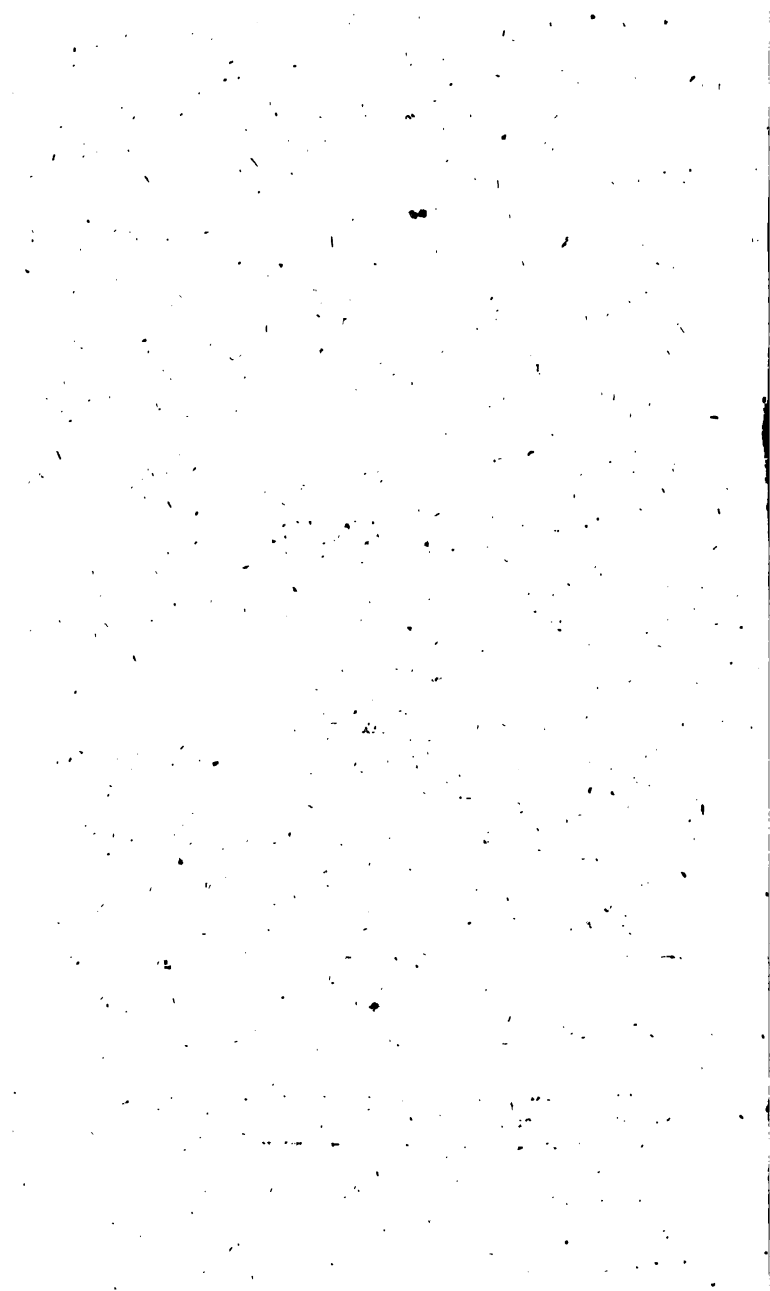




DI MONTRANZO.

A ROMANCE.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.



DI MONTRANZO;

OR,

THE NOVICE OF CORPUS DOMINI.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

LOUISA SIDNEY STANHOPE;

AUTHOR OF

MONTEBRASIL ABBEY; THE BANDIT'S BRIDE; STRIKING
LIKENESSES; THE AGE WE LIVE IN, &c. &c.

This is an act so newly horrid,
So ghastly a contrivance of revenge,
That fiends themselves would start at the proposal.

LEE.

VOL. II:

LONDON:

PRINTED AT THE

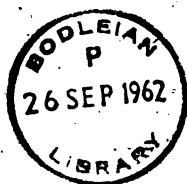
Spencer Press,

FOR A. K. NEWMAN AND CO.

(Successors to Lane, Newman, and Co.)

LEADENHALL-STREET.

1810.



DI MONTRANZO.

CHAP. I.

Who can relate the tale, without a tear?

DAYDEN.

.....

Blessed are those

Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,

That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger

To sound what stop she pleases!

SHAKESPEARE.

"IT was on the eve of the Carnival, two days after my arrival at Venice, that, in crossing the Rialto, a stranger rushed hastily past me, absorbed in deep reflection: his pace was unequal; sometimes pausing, apparently subdued by feeling; sometimes
VOL. II. B hurrying

hurrying on, as though the very shadow of his own form was conjured up into a pursuer. Yielding to the impulse of the moment, I kept him in view, fearing lest misfortune had vacillated reason, lest desperation should drive to the black oblivion of self-slaughter. He perceived not my intention, although I followed him to the shore of the Adriatic—although, rendered bold, I ventured sufficiently near to catch the deep sigh, as it swelled his pent-up bosom. Witness, Heaven! it was not mere curiosity, but compassion, that induced me thus to purloin the secret of his sorrows! To a stranger, pride might have checked the tale of misfortune; from a stranger, the offer of service might have been rejected—I knew the inborn greatness of a Venetian soul, I pitied the internal struggles of a Venetian spirit. Poverty, my heart whispered, was the source of affliction; and, with exulting satisfaction, that source I determined to remove. Instantly I formed a plan of following the stranger to his dwelling,

ing, of gaining from report the extent of his embarrassments; and, with a privacy which might defy the studied efforts at discovery, recall him back to peace: but scarcely had the project gained birth, when a new field for conjecture was awakened; the breeze of evening wafted aside the dark cloak that enshrouded his form, and, by the help of the chaste moonbeams sporting on the undulating bosom of the Adriatic, I discovered the glittering ensignias of greatness. Still he advanced, and still I pursued; until a curved turning in the clift disclosed a small but elegant portico, extending its Parian pillars to the entrance of a villa, whose romantic picturesque beauties might have defied the pencil of Fancy to have surpassed: behind it rose a grove of cedars; while, on either side, the waving heads of the mourning cypress yielded to the balmy breeze: large spreading chestnuts expanded o'er the dwelling, beneath whose shade imagination might picture it reposing. The stranger paused; he folded

his arms upon his breast, and bitter was his sigh, as his eyes, wandering from window to window, seemed in search of some object to rest on. I concluded him to be some romantic lover, come to offer up his devotion at the shrine of his heart's idolatry; and, smiling at my own officious zeal, I was about returning to Venice, when I saw him bend his knee upon the sand, and lift his voice in denunciation. The accents were familiar to my ear—'Yes, he shall die!' he exclaimed, rising: 'Philippina, 'tis you and love decree it!—To-morrow, haughty maid, when yon expanse swells proudly with its freight of beauty; when the Venetian shores echo the sounds of merriment, and love's soft airs die on the ocean's trembling wave, you shall appease the angry tumult of my soul, and steal me into rapture: yes, to-morrow, ere the crested moon withdraws her rays, pride shall have reaped an ample compensation; nor fate, nor hell, a second time, shall blast me!' Again he folded himself in the concealment

cealment of his cloak, and, darting into a path which wound around the cliff, disappeared in a moment.

“ Musing on what I had heard, yet undecided how to act, I lingered on the beach, in expectation of the stranger’s reappearance ; but no sound, save the monotony of the waves breaking on the pebbled shore, disturbed the stillness of the scene. One moment I was for returning, and alarming the vigilance of the inhabitants of the villa ; the next shewed the impotence of the scheme, when the very name of the being against whom vengeance was denounced, was to me a stranger. Possibly the momentary frenzy of disappointed passion had given birth to a plan, the cool dictates of reason would overthrow ; and, in this conclusion, I returned to my lodgings, determining, on the morrow, instead of embarking in the gondola of my friend, to take a solitary ramble towards the villa, on the shores of

the Adriatic, and acting as occasion might require,

“ Reflecting on the mysterious words of the unknown, whose voice, sounding familiar to my senses, awakened in vain the labouring powers of recognition, the night and succeeding day passed heavily. The sounds of revelry, the invitations of mirth, the rosy smiles of beauty, and the insidious calls of pleasure, alike ineffectually strove to overthrow my resolution: I saw my friends embark, I saw the gondola push from land, I heard the waves resound with the splash of the oar: gradually its streaming pendants diminished, gradually the sounds of harmony, dying into murmur, ceased to breathe; and then, summoning an attendant, fearless, yet prepared for an attack, I bent my steps towards the villa. I had nearly reached the jutting point which hid the portico from view, when I paused involuntarily at the sound of voices: ‘ Father,’ lisped the accents of female softness,

ness, 'yet a little further; only turn yon corner, and the whole expanse will be before us. Ah, what a gay scene! How I long——' she checked herself, and concluded, 'but, if you are weary, we will return.'—'No, Philippina, I am not weary,' was the response: 'but, alas! to immure you, my child, in a solitude so uncongenial to the inclinations of youth, embitters the remnant of my days, and forces me to murmur at the obscurity of my lot.'—'Oh, now you are cruel!' said the sweet Philippina: 'indeed, indeed, I care not for all the pleasures of the world; if we were rich, perhaps we should not be half so happy. Content, my father, is a store of wealth, which the great would purchase with all their treasures.'

'Can this be the haughty beauty,' I mentally apostrophized, 'whose disdain has changed the sigh of love into the denunciation of revenge?' Ah, how little did she merit the accusation!—She approached, leaning on the arm of her father; and

I beheld all that was rare in form, all that was exquisite in beauty : her blue eyes, melting in tender languor, were fixed upon her parent, while over her lovely features the laughing graces of Hygeia seemed to play, as her rosy finger pointed to the gaily freighted bosom of the Adriatic.— Alas ! who, unmoved, could have beheld a being so peerless, so replete with infantine innocence, with modest unobtrusive playfulness ? Her soul was the seat of every virtue, her countenance the reflective mirror of that soul.—But I forget,” said the Duca mournfully, “ that the panegyrics of a lover possess no claim on the attention of a stranger ; I forget that you, Signor, unacquainted with the glowing charms of Philippina, must condemn the minuteness of a detail, which can boast no other ornament than truth.

“ Musing on the beauteous vision which, but a moment before, had burst upon my sight ; nay, almost pitying the unfortunate being whose adoration could claim no reciprocal

ciprocal sigh, I turned once more to gaze on the sylphid form, but the envious rock had interposed ; and, as I stood, a shriek of mingled agony and terror assailed my ear. Pausing not an instant, for my heart whispered it could be none other than Philippina, I grasped my sword, and, calling to my servant, rushed hastily to her rescue. It was indeed Philippina, struggling in the sacrilegious grasp of a wretch, who, heedless of her distraction, was endeavouring to force her to a boat ; while the nearly-frantic father, rendered desperate by outraged nature, combatting the united strength of two assassins, was madly calling on Heaven to avenge her wrongs. The effect and the design were alike instantaneous : my sword was unsheathed—the villain fell. Regardless of the pale, the almost dying Philippina, I flew to the assistance of her father ; but, alas ! the daggers of his assailants had already laid him low—gasping, bleeding, he had fallen on the sand ; and the cowardly instruments of

another's vengeance, beholding the fall of their leader, and the unexpected interference of myself and servant, fled. At a loss how to act, I returned to the still-senseless Philippina, hoping, by recalling her to life, to be aided by her counsels; and, as I knelt at her side, as I drew her from the nerveless grasp of her ravisher, my eyes resting on his face, I recognised the inveterate foe of my dearest friend—the Marchese di Montranzo, the once-rejected lover of the Marchesa.

“Soon were the fleeting senses of Philippina restored, and, with them, that rich mine of fortitude, those powers of action, so peculiarly her own. My servant was sent to the villa to procure assistance; and in a short time, upon a kind of litter, we conveyed thither the unfortunate De Linch-stein. But Philippina, even in her anxious solicitude for her father, forgot not the cause of humanity; she raised her blue eyes to my face, as, kneeling, she supported the head of her parent, and besought me to

succour the guilty author of her calamity : ' If he should die,' she articulated, and tears, such as angels shed, streamed down her cheeks, ' ah think, Signor, how little he can be prepared !'—' Believe me, sweet maid, he merits the doom he has provoked.'—' But, so guilty !' resumed Philippina : ' fly, in mercy fly, and awaken the powers of repentance !'—' Perhaps the powers of future mischief,' I involuntarily pronounced. — ' Humanity sanctions the effort, Heaven destines the effect,' rejoined Philippina. The solemnity of her manner conveyed a reproach, which deprived me of the power of further delay : I hastened from her presence, and returned to the beach ; but the body of the Conte Manfredini was nowhere to be seen ; the sand, still stained with the empurpled stream, marked the spot where he had reclined, but the boat had disappeared, and no vestige to steer by could be discovered.

" It is here necessary," said the Duca, bowing an apology for digressing from his

story, " to acquaint you, Signor, how my knowledge of the Conte Manfredini commenced : it was at Florence that I first beheld him, when love led thither the young Marchese di Montranzo, to lay at the feet of the beautiful heiress of the Marchese di Novarra, the laurels of fame, the hopes of bliss. The discernment of the Signora singled out my friend ; and Di Manfredini, rejected, became his foe. His implacable heart harboured vengeance : like the insidious serpent, envying the happiness he could not share, he pined to turn its rich hopes into bitterness, to poison the vital stream of Di Montranzo's felicity : but the effort, black as the soul which formed it, was blasted ; his machinations recoiled upon himself ; and, in the disgrace of convicted baseness, he fled in secrecy. The Marchese, blessed in the affection of the fondly-selected partner of his life, blessed in the darling heir which she had given to his honours, wasted not one thought on a being so unworthy ; he returned to his native

tive province, Umbria; and in the blessings of his dependants, in the regard of his friends, and the approbation of his own heart, passed his days in tranquil content.

“ But, to return from whence I have wandered: for many days the unfortunate De Linchtenstein lingered, lost even to the attentions of his child; his wound bore the most alarming appearance; and when he spoke, the incoherent wanderings of delirium marked his every accent. Hourly did I witness the patient endurance, the pious resignation, the filial tenderness, of Philippina—her whole soul was unveiled to my inspection; I saw all that was chaste, all that was lovely, all that was desirable, in woman: one moment she was the assiduous nurse, the next, the sensitive, feeling daughter; now elevated by the enthusiasm of hope, now kneeling, the beautiful semblance of a meek-eyed saint: as such, I could have worshipped her, as such, I could have hid her in my bosom, could have cherished her as a precious reliquary.

Alas !

Alas ! I guessed not the extent of my own feelings ; alas ! I guessed not the magnetic influence, which the cultivated understanding, the ingenuous mind, the elegant simplicity of the untitled De Linchtenstein's daughter, had acquired. I loved her, with the romantic fervour of sincere affection ; I loved her with an uncontrollable ardour, which defied every barrier ; ambition, family, fortune, all, all vanished—Philippina was the world to me ; Philippina was the polar star, which lighted me on to happiness : with her, I could have smiled at the malevolence of fortune ; without her, life appeared a desolate span, an aggregate of woe.

“ At the expiration of a week, the alarming symptoms abated ; the wound which De Linchtenstein had received, gradually healed, and the sanative powers of reason returned : then did I mark the quick throb of joy in the countenance of my sweet companion, then did I see peace and hope revive, even from the embers of despondency.

dency. Ah! how does memory, tender, cruel memory, retrace the happy features of life's blissful æra! how does it linger over departed joys, and mock us with her delusive powers! 'Twas then I first knew the value of existence; 'twas then, in the delicious retirement of De Linchtenstein's villa, my soul acknowledged the rapture of sympathy. Supporting the steps of my Philippina, together we watched the ocean's gradual swell, sometimes softened by the monotonous roar of the waves, sometimes sublimed into elevation at the magnitude of the scene. What was the great world, what were the charms of society, to a heart like mine? Breathless I would listen to the grateful exclamations, the pious remarks, of my charming companion; and then sigh to resign every illusion of greatness, every insignia of grandeur—sigh to live alone for love, for Philippina, for domestic bliss.

“Days and weeks rolled rapidly away; yet still did I linger at Venice, still did I evade the enquiries of my family, and conceal

ceal from them the magnet which held my heart in bondage : but, alas ! the smile of love, the intercourse of sentiment, soon yielded to anxious fears and desponding apprehensions. The wound of De Linch-stein had indeed healed, but, from the moment of infliction, his constitution had imperceptibly weakened—the energies of life had been blasted. Conscious of his approaching end, bowing in submission to that mandate which summoned him from a world of sorrow, he felt but one pang, and that arose in the unprotected, unsupported, unallied prospects of his orphan child. Driven by the rude hand of misfortune from his native land, with his only remaining treasure he had quitted Germany, and settled on the shores of the Adriatic ; and now, to leave her guileless innocence, her unsuspecting loveliness, exposed to the designing and the base, coloured the pang of death, and baffled the efforts of resignation. ‘ I will be her friend,’ I exclaimed, as I marked the struggles of parental solicitude ;
‘ ah,

‘ah, more ! I will be her husband !’ A momentary ray of joy flashed from the sunken eyes of De Linchtenstein.—‘ My arms,’ I pursued, regardless of his effort to speak, ‘ shall shield her from the storms of life ; and my heart——’ —‘ But your father !’ interrupted the nearly-exhausted De Linchtenstein.—‘ My father !’ I eagerly rejoined, hurried away by the wild transports of love, ‘ oh ! let him but behold my Philippina, and every prejudice of rank will yield to nature and to virtue ! Once mine, what else shall I have to fear ? Once sanctioned by the rites of marriage, once invested with the hallowed title of husband, Philippina will be my tower of strength, my comfort, my solace—Philippina will be to me the world, will be father, will be every thing.’

“ I sprung from my seat, and, regardless of the deep dejection which pervaded the features of De Linchtenstein, hurried from the chamber, eager to realize the picture I had drawn. In the grove of cypress which
fringed

fringed the rural garden of the villa, I found Philippina; her eyes, surcharged with tears, were raised to Heaven, and her snowy bosom heaved with the sigh of woe.

‘ Philippina,’ I exclaimed, snatching her passive hand, ‘ I too am a suppliant, I too solicit mercy; ’tis from you I crave the bequest of peace, of comfort, of bliss!’ and then I unfolded my plan of future felicity, and urged the necessity of an immediate marriage. Alas! sobs were the sad responses to my rapture; and when I paused, with a heavy sigh she murmured— ‘ My father dying, and I to think of comfort! my father——’ — ‘ ’Tis for the sake of that father, ’tis to sooth the last hours of his existence,’ interrupting her, ‘ that I urge my request: to see his child happy, to see her guarded by the watchful vigilance of a husband’s love, will lighten the cares of life, will smooth the passage to eternity. Do not weep, Philippina; our hearts have long been united, long has affection stamped us each other’s: ah! surely

surely then punctilious delicacy demands too much, if her barrier is to overthrow the hopes of love.—‘It is not delicacy,’ faltered the blushing Philippina, ‘but duty, which prescribes the step. Your family—ah, merciful Heaven! could I live to be spurned, to be despised, to be considered an intruder; to know myself an alienator between father and son; perhaps to experience reproach, or chilling coldness?’—‘Coldness, Philippina! coldness from me! Cruel, unjust one! to doubt an affection which, from the first moment I beheld you, constituted part of myself: coldness——’
—‘Pardon me,’ softening into tears; ‘alas! my weak, my yielding, my too treacherous heart, feels that duty and rectitude are the only arguments it can educe.’—‘Then yield at once, my love; relinquish those arguments, and become my bride.’—‘What!’ shuddering, ‘and incur the heavy weight of a father’s malediction?’—‘That father will relent,’ I eagerly exclaimed; ‘that father will receive, will bless the dutious daughter’

daughter bounteous Heaven shall hold forth; that father will deprecate the prejudice of birth, and yield to the force of nature.'—'Alas! you speak the fallacious dictates of hope,' said Philippina, slowly returning to the villa, 'dictates which, in anticipation, hold forth a brilliant scene realization will blight.'—'Let fate but give you to my arms,' I eagerly exclaimed, 'and the realization must be bliss. But my father knows not of your perfections; perhaps——'—'Fly to him then,' rejoined Philippina; 'persevere in the tract of duty; banish him not your confidence; and when he shall hear,' sweetly blushing, 'that the happiness of your life depends upon his approbation of your choice, he may overlook the insignificance of its election, and——'—'But, should he spurn me from him,' fearfully interrupting her; 'should he bid me think of you no more.'—'Why then,' she concluded, and her bosom swelled with a bitter sigh, 'we must yield to the decision, and, with the internal
nal

nal satisfaction of having performed our duty, endeavour to be content.'—'Endeavour to be content!' I reproachfully repeated; 'ah, Philippina! how am I to judge, if, from the feelings of my own heart, it tells me love could not argue so coldly?'

"Instantly regretting what I had said (for her eyes filled with tears, and a melancholy expression of wounded feeling pervaded her features), I took her hand; yet, wishing at once to discover the extent of her romantic project, I repressed the softened dictates of repentance, and continued—'If, guided by my father, if, sacrificing love to duty, I should dare to forget the tenderness I have awakened—if death should deprive you of your parent, and ingratitude of your lover, where, Philippina, would you fly for consolation?'—Instantly her tears vanished, for the expression of indignant pride dried their source. 'Where, where, Philippina,' I again whispered, 'would you fly for consolation?'—The conflict was past; nature, sensibility,

sensibility, returned.—‘ I would fly,’ she sobbed, ‘ where the treachery of man could not enter—I would fly to the altar of my God—I would fly for consolation to religion.’—‘ And where shall I fly for consolation ?’—‘ To a father’s love,’ she eagerly replied, ‘ to the sweet self-approbation of filial duty : yes, while prostrate on the cold marble, I pray for your happiness, while dedicating my future life to the service of my Creator, I strive to banish your image from my memory, he will receive you to his bosom, he will reinstate you in his confidence.’—‘ And will that compensate for all besides ?’ I enquired ; ‘ will that silence every pang which wounded love can inflict ?—No, no, my Philippina ; perish the arbitrary power which would contról the best affections of the heart ! perish the influence which would subjugate nature !—Let my father banish me his presence, let him disinherit me his possessions ; love will mollify adversity, love will make amends for the chimerical charms of wealth, splendour,

splendour, distinction; love will annihilate every inferior sense, and transcribe the page of life with virtuous content, with uncomplaining mediocrity.'

"On reaching the villa, a letter was presented to me, which filled me with apprehension, the superscription being in the handwriting of my father. Philippina, witnessing my agitation, left me to myself. I broke the seal, and, scarce knowing what I did, perused the contents: rage and disdain marked every epithet. He had discovered the magnet which retained me at Venice, and spoke of De Linchtenstein and his angel daughter, with the bitterest invectives: he denounced the heavy wrath of his displeasure, if I persevered in a conduct so degenerate; and commanded me either to return instantly to Tuscany, or no longer consider myself his son. Thunderstruck, dismayed, for a considerable time I stood with the letter in my hand, without the inclination, nay, without the power, of exertion: to part with Philippina

pina was death ; to brave the anger of a parent, madness. At length I determined to conceal from the father and daughter the deadly contents of the epistle, lest they too should join in the fiat of separation ; and on the following morning, in compliance with the injunctions I had received, resolved to return to Tuscany ; not as a prelude of passive obedience, but in the hope of ultimately obtaining his acquiescence—in the hope that the all-powerful pleadings of nature, assailing his heart, would rise triumphant. Sweet were the tears which Philippina shed at the moment of separation ! precious those tacit acknowledgments of love, when the feelings defy disguise ! ‘ Go, Eugenio,’ she faintly murmured, ‘ and may Heaven, in the approbation of parental love, sanction our hopes !’—De Linchtenstein grasped my hand with more than usual fervour, grasped it as though he would have said, ‘ *Farewell for ever !*’—Alas ! fatal, dire foreboding of eternal separation !—‘ We shall meet again,’

again,' I articulated, struggling for composure—'meet, to part no more.'—'Yes, in Heaven,' solemnly rejoined De Linchтенstein.—My Philippina, sobbing, sunk into my arms. I turned my head, and one glance confirmed the too-probable assertion: sickness had robbed his sunken eyes of their fire, and his every feature wore the pallid stamp of approaching dissolution.

"Fearful of losing the slender vestige of fortitude which remained, I tore myself from a tenderness so seducing; and when the intervening cliff defied the lingering glance of love longer to discern the peaceful dwelling of my Philippina, I felt as one isolated from every joy, as one lost to the charm of existence. Early the following morning I quitted Venice, resolving either to obtain the consent of my father, or, in defiance of his authority, to return to the shores of the Adriatic, and trust to the rhetoric of persuasion. Perhaps, owing to my ready acquiescence to his mandate, the

Duca di Monte Melissario received me with condescending affection : he spoke not of the subject of his letter, nor, for several days after my arrival at Florence, did he once complain of the length of my absence, or hint his knowledge of the cause. —Undecided how to proceed, wishing, yet knowing not how to disclose the hidden sentiments of my heart, a week wore heavily away, and the pangs of absence became almost insupportable. It was then that an epistle from Philippina, breathing in every line the dejection of suspense and sorrow, aroused me to exertion : she told me, that, since my departure, her father had drooped, and his illness had encreased ; that she feared the moment approached, when death would deprive her of her support, and marble the only bosom on which she dared to repose her griefs. ‘ Oh, Eugenio !’ she wrote, ‘ the world judges not the pure motives of regard ; the world places an insuperable bar between your offers of friendship and my acceptance. An

An unprotected, hapless, destitute orphan, is a mark for the shafts of slander, the declamations of malevolence : I must fly, even from your affection ; yes, I must seek an asylum in a cloister ; for there alone can I escape censure, there alone can my fame be safe.'—' No, my Philippina,' I mentally apostrophized, as I hastened in search of the Duca, ' not in a cloister must you seek for safety : even when fate shall have deprived you of your parent, one sympathizing, one tender bosom, will remain to solate your afflictions, to silence, through the authority of a husband, the dreaded calumny of the world.'

“ With animated hope, with eager rapture, I knelt at my father's feet ; I grasped his hand, and looked imploringly in his face, as I unfolded the progress of my attachment, as I dwelt on the virtue, the beauty, the excellence of Philippina. Gradually gaining courage from his forbearance, I hinted that existence, save in her presence, had lost every charm ; that Phi-

lippina was the spring of hope, was the blessing my soul pictured ; and that, when I ceased to adore her perfections, I must cease to live. Passion conquered every sentiment in the heart of the Duca ; he called me vile, degenerate, base ; a blot to dignity, an alien to his affections : De Linchtenstein was the artful plotter of my ruin, and Philippina the Circe who had entangled me in the snare.

“ Fearful of forgetting the respect I owed to the author of my being, I attempted to withdraw, but he detained me : ‘ Eugenio,’ he exclaimed, ‘ it still remains in your power to regain my confidence, to be considered my son : swear to return no more to Venice, swear to renounce an infatuation so ignoble, and I promise to pardon what has passed, I promise to reinstate you in my confidence.’—‘ Never, never !’ I replied : ‘ I will not deceive you—Philippina is the world to me. Blessed with her affection, life cannot be destitute ; but, without her, neither fortune or rank,
homage

homage or dissipation, can ward off despair.'—'Perverse, infatuated boy!' said the Duca, 'your obstinacy calls for condemnation. Remember, this is the last time I condescend to speak on a subject so ungracious, so hateful; and remember likewise, that when you forget your dignity, when you degrade your birth, by marrying the plebeian daughter of De Linchtenstein, your father throws off every tie of nature, and curses the disobedient apostate to his authority.'

"Rushing from the library, he left me confounded, horror-struck. The cruelty, the injustice of my father's judgment, conquered every lingering impulse of duty, and I determined to quit Florence, and return to Venice. I wrote immediately to Philippina, apprizing her of my intention; I passed lightly over my conference with the Duca, but dwelt on the pangs of absence with all the warm ardour of love. At the moment of my departure, I again sought my father; but he sternly forbade

the theme which hung upon my lips to transpire : he repeated the fatal sentence of malediction in case of my disobedience, and suffered me to quit his presence, without relaxing, in the smallest degree, from his severity.

“ On reaching the environs of Venice, uneasiness and dejection, as if banished the magic circle of love, vanished, and hope and joy resumed their place : my heart felt lightened of its sorrows, and my oppressed bosom swelled with freer respiration, as I hailed the peaceful dwelling of De Linch-tenstein, and his worshipped daughter.—

Eagerly my eyes wandered over the garden in search of Philippina (it was her usual hour for stealing from the couch of her father), but I traced not her well-known form. The air was serene, the mellowed breeze, wafting its freshness from the green bosom of the Adriatic, played among the waving foliage of the shrubbery, but courted her not from her station. ‘ Unkind Philippina !’ I exclaimed,

ed, hurrying towards the villa, 'in my absence you forget your health—you trifle with your spirits.' Alas! how little did she merit that reproach!—I paused at the entrance of the piazza, for a foreboding sensation iced my blood, and faded my bliss to despondence: the windows of the villa were darkened, and every gloomy insignia marked the close of mortality. I rushed into the hall, I beheld the weeping domestics; I heard that the unfortunate De Linchtenstein was no more—that my Philippina was indeed an orphan. Ah! bitter were the tears she shed in my bosom! heart-rending the sighs she breathed, as she gazed on the placid remains of her parent! She called herself friendless and destitute; but, even in the midst of affliction, she checked the impiety: 'No, not friendless, not destitute,' she continued; 'for religion tempers woe, and offers an antidote to calamity.'

"With deference, with wonder, I gazed upon her: had my father beheld her at

that moment, had he traced the refulgent glow of soul beaming in every feature, he must have worshipped her as a superior being, he must have blessed the angel-guide of his son's sublunary pilgrimage. I led her from the chamber of death, where, but the evening before, she had witnessed the last faint struggles of suffering nature. On reaching the parlour, she held forth a letter, directed to me in the handwriting of her father: I took it, I pressed it to my lips; I broke the seal, and she sunk on a chair, and wept. Never shall I forget the contents of an epistle, in which the feelings of nature so triumphantly conquered every other sentiment: weak, exhausted, dying, De Linchtenstein thought of his child, and grasped at my friendship, as to the last sustaining branch of hope.

‘OUR parting proves prophetic,’ he wrote—‘I feel the last solemn change approaching, I feel the scenes of life

life receding from my view. Every thought, every impulse, every wish, but of the parent; dies within me; that, alas! struggles with mortality, that bids defiance until the last effort of memory. Ere I go hence, and am no more seen; ere the grave shall enshrine the mortal part of a once-doting father, to you, Eugenio, excellent young man! amiable friend! to you I commit the care, the honour, the happiness of Philippina. You love each other, my children, you are formed for each other's felicity; let not then the vain scruples of delicacy, let not a mistaken respect to my memory, defer a union, which virtue, which propriety, which inclination sanctions.— Philippina, you are young, you are unprotected; the world will judge harshly of your actions, nay, your very innocence will condemn you: with a husband, or in a convent, you must seek refuge. Witness, great Author of the universe! in this election, neither pride or ambition; no, nor one sublunary passion, influences my motives;

tives ; if I err, it is in judgment, not from the heart: pardon then, Father of Heaven, the fault, nor on the offspring visit the offence of the parent ; grant that the sacred covenant of marriage be the cement of confidence, of bliss, of affection ; let no untoward event shadow their hopes, or blight their prospects !—I think I feel there will not. Oh ! may the assurance be prophetic, and I die in peace ! The Duca must yield to the resistless pleadings of Nature ; he will receive Philippina for Eugenio's sake, he will love her for her own ; he will welcome his children ; he will live, while I die, blessing them. Farewell, my son, my daughter ; dear tender ties, farewell ! I have given you to each other, and I need no longer linger—the world has no more claims upon me : I sink beneath the pressure of disease, the burden of age. For the last, last time, my darling Philippina, my Eugenio, farewell ! In a few short hours, the heart, now so anxious, will have ceased to beat ; in a few short
hours,

hours, the forms, so dear to memory, will be forgotten.

‘ LOUIS DE LINCHTENSTEIN.’

‘ Philippina,’ articulated, as I concluded the letter, ‘ your father gives you to me;’ but not all my efforts, not all my arguments, could sooth her into composure; sobs were the only responses I could obtain; and when I spoke of future peace, her tears and her agitation augmented. Each revolving day beheld her absorbed in melancholy; and not for a month after the interment of her father, did she suffer me for a moment to speak of a plan my heart so eagerly suggested; even then, she baffled my persuasions with all the refinements of delicacy; nor yielded to them, till the wishes of her departed parent were held forth as an auxiliary: then, with blushing, hesitating reluctance, she acceded to my proposals; and in two days, in a small chapel, a few hundred yards from the villa,

the rite of marriage was destined to be celebrated.

“Suffer me here to pause,” said the Duca, abruptly breaking the thread of his narrative; “alas! when Memory takes a retrospective view, her pangs are distraction: to-morrow perhaps, but to-day I cannot.—Oh, Philippina! buoyed by the sunshine of hope, I thought every obstacle surmounted, I thought the ray of bliss shone on our prospects, I thought felicity was our own!” Hiding his face in his hands, he rose from his seat, and slowly paced the apartment.

CHAP. II.

A parent's rights lose their instinctive powers, when tyranny takes place of reason and affection.

Mrs. ROBINSON.

"ALAS!" sighed the Duca, as, the following morning, he resumed the thread of his narrative, "often, in the moment of promised felicity, does prophetic forebodings, gloomy presages of approaching evil, oppress the mind, and, in a fleeting moment, stamp on it the images of dire calamity: such was the fatal transition my heart experienced, as I flew to the appointed spot, to reap the rich harvest of my faithful persevering affection. The sun shone not upon our union; hid behind a cloud, the

6

darkened

darkened sky looked threatening; the wind sighed in hollow murmurs, and the agitated waves of the Adriatic broke sullenly upon the shore. Supporting the trembling steps of my companion, blushing, lovely as was the parent of mankind, ere sin defaced the reign of innocence, we approached the chapel. 'What am I about to do?' asked Philippina, as the long shadow of the sacred edifice darkened our path: 'perhaps,' fearfully, 'to embitter your future days;—perhaps to commit an act, you, even you, may wish erased from the records of time. Father of Heaven, aid me in the trial; and thou, pure spirit of my departed parent!'—'Say rather, my Philippina,' I exclaimed, folding her to my throbbing bosom; 'say rather to snatch me from despondency, to place me beyond the fear of separation, to give me happiness. Behold,' leading her into the chapel, 'the holy man awaits: at yon altar our vows will be sanctified; there will perish the dread of being parted, there the malignant

malignant powers of fortune will lose their worst sting.'

"The desponding gloom which so unpropitious had hung upon my spirits, vanished; felicity, rapture, was indeed my own. The ceremony was concluded; man was forbidden to break the hallowed bonds, the sacred ties of Heaven's ordination, which united us, and Philippina, the idol of my soul's affection, was become the willing arbitress of my destiny. But, alas! the chequered scenes of life bore a different aspect! The surcharged vial of fate hung ready, to pour upon our defenceless heads the bitterest dregs, hung ready to crush us in the moment of fancied security. 'Here, my love,' I exclaimed, as we returned towards the villa, and traced its Parian front contrasting with the deep foliage of surrounding verdure, 'no despotic father can interpose, to blast the early spring of love; here, hid from the great world, and all its idle train of fancied importance, innocence, truth, constancy, will
be

be ours; and every repining wish, every unhallowed thought, will fly the circle of our humble dwelling.'—'Ah! will they? and for ever?' whispered Philippina—'Can my presumptuous heart dare picture an influence so unlimited? Will no repining wish ever point to the world's allurements, ever sigh for the path of grandeur you were born to tread?—Should the hopes you have fondly cherished prove fallacious, should your father proudly spurn all efforts at reconciliation, should he banish you his presence, and curse the union we have newly formed, will the love of the poor Philippina recompense the sacrifice of all besides? Tenacious even to agony, will she alike be the repository of your sorrows, as your joys?'—'Cease, my lovely bride,' I exclaimed; 'banish a theme so inauspicious; cloud not our nuptial morn with a discordant sigh. Witness, Heaven! my heart knows no joy unmingled with your image! and shall the blissful hour of security be shadowed with visionary fears,
with

with unsubstantial dangers?—Philippina, idol of my soul! father, family, nay, the universe combined, cannot snap the indissoluble ties religion has ratified, cannot tear you from me: be then my solace, be then the ministering angel of peace, be—but a faint shriek checked the conclusion.

“Impulsively my arms opened, and received my trembling, agitated bride, to their lawful shelter: ‘Philippina,’ I said, kissing away the burning tears which streamed down her cheeks, ‘why this apprehension? why this encouragement of ideal terror? Am I not near you? am I not your protector, your husband?’—‘Alas!’ she murmured, grasping my hand with convulsive earnestness, ‘my spirits misgive me, my soul sinks in prophetic sadness. Treachery is at work, danger lurks around: I saw a man steal from the shelter of yon grove; perhaps——’ At that instant I felt myself seized, surrounded: Philippina, shrieking, sunk senseless at my feet. In vain I struggled for freedom;

dom ; in vain I raved, I implored, I threatened ; unmoved they witnessed my agony, my despair. ' Monsters ! ' I exclaimed, gazing on the pale features of my angel wife, ' what have you done ? See, see ! you have murdered my bride—my Philippina !—Ah ! give me way ! ' and with a desperate effort I broke from them, and threw myself at her side—' give me way, that I may fold her to my aching heart, and call back life and love !—Philippina ! ' and tears of bitter anguish fell from my eyes upon her bosom, ' Philippina, revive ! they cannot, they dare not part us ; Heaven sanctions not a coercion so unjust, so barbarous. Merciful Providence ! is this the joy of wedded love ? is this the long sighed-for epoch of fancied bliss ? '

' This delay is dangerous,' said one of the men : ' we must away ; our order was expedition.'—' Your order ! ' I repeated, turning frantically towards him : ' if your heart is vulnerable to the mild influence of pity, tell me the extent of that order, tell me

me the name of your employer. Ah ! surely my father would not blacken his soul by an act so base ; surely——’ The man replied not, but again approached to seize his victim : I folded her more closely to my heart, and madly vowed death alone should separate us : but, alas ! short-lived, ineffectual was my resistance ! overpowered by numbers, they dragged my senseless Philippina from me ; and, for many moments, stupified, lost, I stood with my arms clasped, as though they still encircled her.

“ On recovering the pangs of memory, the powers of action, I found myself bound to a tree, numbed, cold, and wretched ; the dews of evening were fast falling, the lengthening shadows of night stealing over the glare of day. Whole hours had elapsed since force had bereaved me of my love—whole hours, which the torpid state of my senses had blotted from the records of time. Holy Heaven, what accumulated woe, what scenes of agony, pressed upon my burning brain ! Philippina dying, lost
for

for ever, mocked every effort of reason, banished every impulse but revenge.— ‘ Yes, I will fly from Venice,’ I exclaimed— ‘ to the globe’s utmost verge I will extend my search ;’ and then I vainly struggled to break the cords which seemed to cut into my soul, to snap the barrier which seemed to hold me from Philippina.

“ My strength exhausted, my mind subdued, again the friendly blank of insensibility stole me from misery—nature yielded to the acme of despair ; and when I revived, stretched on a bed, I found myself surrounded by the servants of the villa : fear, horror, regret, was stamped on every countenance. The fatal truth fell like a deathblow on my heart ; it was no dream—misery was no delusion of the imagination ; alas, no !—Philippina was lost—bliss was changed to anguish.

“ But I will not exhaust your patience, by lingering over the weeks of sickness, of despondency, which succeeded ; suffice it to say, for months I entered not my father’s dwelling—

dwelling—I suffered not the sounds of cheerfulness to assail my ear: Philippina, the ceaseless object of my thoughts, wasting her youth in confinement, sighing out my name, and calling on me for succour, was the spur which directed my search through Italy, France, and Germany; no new form, for a moment, stealing upon my senses, or banishing the remembrance of her perfections; ah, no!—In vain my father urged his wish to see his name, his honours, transmitted to posterity; in vain he urged the insufficiency of an outward ceremony, to bind me to a being who, ere now, might be no more—I existed but upon the memory of Philippina, but upon the possibility of yet again beholding her.

“ It was on the eve of the second anniversary of my ill-starred marriage, of my Philippina’s loss, when, drooping in melancholy despondency, my sad heart resigned the fallacious hopes it had cherished of a reunion, that I was summoned to the bedside of a dying man, who had long
been

been in the service of the family: I found him labouring under the weight of some hidden act of past iniquity; his conscience oppressed, his mind horror-struck, and his imagination racked by the opening prospect of eternity. He shrunk from my approach; he fearfully supplicated mercy: 'yes, from you I dare to ask it,' he faltered; 'Heaven has lengthened my dying moments, and remorse urges separation.'—'From me?' I replied, extending my hand: 'rest in peace, poor sufferer! I you have never injured.' A slight convulsion passed over his features, as, with a hollow groan, he said—'Yes, I have injured you—past redemption injured you: I have transgressed the laws of God; I have been a weak, a wicked tool, in the hands of power; I have steeled my heart against the pleas of misery; I have poisoned the life's hopes of an unoffending being.'—'Holy Heaven!' I ejaculated, as in breathless haste I interrupted him, 'know you ought of Philippina?'—He fixed his languid eyes upon
upon

upon my face, clasped his emaciated hands, and, in low and broken accents, unfolded the horrid tale of iniquity. My Philippina lived ; my Philippina, immured within the walls of the Convent of Corpus Domini, pined in slavery and woe ; my Philippina, by force shrouded in the veil of celibacy, was doomed, by tyranny, to waste her days in comfortless, solitary widowhood : Holy Virgin ! by the harsh mandate of a father, had the laws of nature been violated, had my bride been torn from me.

“ Pausing not a moment, led away by my feelings, I fled from the chamber ; and, burying the knowledge I had acquired in my own breast, under some pretended plea, quitted Florence, and hurried to Fossebrune. There I disguised myself in the tattered habiliments of age and poverty ; a staff supported my tottering steps, and a long beard concealed my countenance.— My plan was, by counterfeiting indisposition and fatigue, to gain admittance into the Convent of Corpus Domini, and, after
discovering

discovering myself to Philippina, to arrange with her some method for our escape, and total renunciation of Italy.

“ With a heart elevated by new-raised hopes, buoyed by the imagined certainty of success, towards evening I beheld the gloomy turrets of the Convent. With the apparent imbecility of age, I approached its walls, and sinking near the gate, breathed moans as heavy as ever were extorted by pain. My stratagem succeeded — the hand of charity was extended; and a few moments beheld me beneath the same roof with Philippina. Eagerly I marked the features of the nuns who sought to minister to my comfort, but my beloved came not. Ah! little did she guess the being who had ventured so much to behold her; little did she guess that the persevering affection of her husband had penetrated even into the heart of her prison.

“ Accepting the specifics which humanity prescribed, I was left to repose; but no sooner did silence reign around, than,
rising

rising from my hard couch, I paced the narrow limits of my chamber, my thoughts revolving on the singularity of my situation, and the steps necessary to be pursued. A thousand wild projects, all wearing alike the appearance of impracticability, alternately succeeded each other—alternately were cherished and renounced. Hitherto success had crowned my endeavours: but, though within the walls of *Corpus Domini*, Philippina gladdened not my sight—alas! perhaps she could not; illness might confine her to her cell, and all my efforts might be essayed in vain: my heart sickened at the suggestion, my desponding spirits yielded to melancholy. The night passed slowly away; for, reclining on the couch in wakeful misery, I marked the revolving hours: not once did sleep silence the remembrance of my woes, not once did it sooth my harrassed spirits to forgetfulness.

“The misty grey of morning was gradually swelling into day, and the tinkling

monotony of the matin-bell, summoning to the exercise of devotion, when a light step in the passage, succeeded by the opening of my door, recalled to mind the necessity of personating languor. With well-assumed lassitude, I looked up, and beheld the slim, the almost-shadowy form, of a sister of Corpus Domini: her black veil, thrown back, hung in graceful folds to her feet; one hand numbered the beads of her rosary, the other held a taper, whose flame, from the overpowering ray of morning, cast a sickly ray over her countenance.—Ah, merciful Heaven! in that spectre-image I traced the sad remnant of the once-blooming, once-happy Philippina! Sorrow had banquetted on the roses of her cheeks, had banished the elasticity of health, the fire of youth: her eyes, in rayless melancholy, bent towards the ground, while a soft, a melting languor, pervaded every feature.—Gently approaching the couch, she paused, to listen if I slept. Almost unconscious of what I did, panting, breathless,

less, I snatched her hand: I fixed my eyes on her still-lovely features; I thought I saw a transient glow pass over her pale cheek; but it was fancy—she knew me not; my disguise even blinded the eyes of love. ‘Philippina!’ I articulated; the taper dropped from her hand—she tottered, she fell into my arms. Forgetful even of the danger of discovery, I clasped her with wild, with terrifying energy: ‘Philippina! my wife! my love!’ She looked up, struggled for a moment, hid her face in my bosom, and burst into tears.—Merciful Heaven! what were my sensations in that critical moment! what my anguish, as, hanging over my bride, the black veil of her order, shrouding her, as it were, from my love, blasted my sight! Yes, Philippina was professed, and I dared not assert my right; Philippina was professed, and, save through the aid of artifice, was lost to me for ever.—‘Alas!’ she articulated, as the powers of speech returned, ‘why do I see you here? Fly this horrid

place!’ and still she clung tighter to my bosom—‘fly! leave me to my fate: danger and death lurk around. Holy Virgin, shield my beloved! Let the dart of tyranny crush my devoted head!—But for him——’ —‘Philippina,’ interrupting her, ‘think not to change my firm resolve: I will stay—I will die with you! My inhuman father shall no longer triumph in his arts: he has renounced nature, henceforth I renounce his prerogative.’—She sobbed, she shrunk from my arms upon her knees: ‘Eugenio,’ she implored, raising her clasped hands, ‘in mercy, hear me! ’Tis true, solitude nor religion can efface your dear image from my heart; ’tis true, violence, treachery, tore me from your arms, severed me from the world, clothed me in these hated garments of regret and misery: but yet,’ fearfully, ‘though compulsory, there is a vow, which, could the very thought to profane be discovered, would provoke death; there is a vow——’ —‘A *prior* vow, a thousand times more binding,’ I exclaimed,

claimed, ' declares you mine. Marriage is the sacred ordination of Heaven ; and shall man, my Philippina, by the authority of self-arrogated power, sever two hearts so closely linked? Forbid it, justice ! forbid it, mercy !—No ; flying from these hated walls, emancipated, free, we will resign grandeur allied to apprehension, for a cottage blessed with content.'—' Alas ! ' sighed the timid nun, ' how impracticable the scheme ! Think of the high walls which enshrine me, think of the Argus eyes which so closely watch me, and tell me the passage for escape.'—' Love will find that *passage*,' I replied ; ' love will scale those *walls*, love will blind those *eyes*.'—' Love ! ' sweetly smiling—' and will love absolve my vow ? '—' Duty and conscience will absolve it,' again clasping her to my bosom ; ' for nature and sensibility will become the pleaders.'

" The sound of a distant footstep recalled the necessity for caution : terrified, she sprung from me, drew her veil over her

face, and recovered her taper. — ‘ But where? how can I hear from you?’ I whispered. — ‘ Alas!’ she replied, ‘ the strictness of the order prohibits the privilege of writing, else, had I pens, had I paper, beneath the hollow base of the pedestal bearing the image of St. Clare, could I deposit my letter.’ — ‘ There will I seek it,’ I exclaimed, giving her my tablets. — The footsteps approached: hastily she hid them in her bosom, and fled from the cell.

‘ Daughter,’ asked a voice in the passage, ‘ how fares the invalid? Was it to render him assistance, that you absented yourself from the chapel?’ — ‘ It was indeed the sufferer who detained me, holy mother,’ faltered Philippina. — ‘ Humanity is a sacred call,’ rejoined the superior, ‘ but religion ought to be stronger.’ My Philippina spoke no more; and the Lady Abbess entering the cell, questioned me with an accuracy which required more than ordinary caution.

“ Eagerly did I watch for the moment,
when,

when, unobserved, I could fly to regain my tablets; but not until the sisterhood had assembled in the refectory, did I venture to quit my cell. At the entrance of the passage, I hailed the friendly pedestal; and snatching the treasured effusion of my Philippina's soul, returned to my chamber. Fearful of interruption, I dared not peruse the contents, until the distant sound of voices could no longer be distinguished—until gloom and silence marked the repose of nature; then, with palpitating haste, I trimmed the lamp, and eagerly de-eyphered sentiments which time itself can never efface.

‘EUGENIO,’ she wrote,
‘I have reflected on all you have said, and the conviction has banished every lingering prejudice which religion had enforced; I have reflected on all you have said, and virtue, and truth, and honour, are become your advocates: yes, my beloved, my law-

ful protector, nature, duty, sanctions the act you propose. The sway of inclination I dared not consult, for that would have betrayed me; but the cool arguments of reason, the unimpassioned sentiments of morality, point to freedom, and to bliss. I was your wife, ere the hand of treachery tore me from you; I am your wife, in spite of the compulsory vow of a Corpus Domini sister. When borne to this asylum; when, frantic, wretched, I called upon your name, and invoked the saints of heaven to assert our marriage; when, kneeling at the feet of the superior, I poured forth the story of my woes, and told her what I had suffered, and how I had been wronged, she spurned me from her; talked of judgment for presumption, of parental authority, of female vanity, of monastic power: she deprived me of all hope, she condemned me to solitude and despair: my arguments were styled profane, my objections perverse; my prayers, my tears, artifice; and my adjurations, heresy. Not
one

one heart within these heavy walls, could I find to pity or to aid ; alas, no !—in spite of opposition, in spite of remonstrance, the novitiatory months were prescribed, and eternal slavery, eternal woe, were destined my prospects through life. But my thoughts were free—my tyrant could not limit their bounds ; they wandered to the peaceful shores of the Adriatic, to my cottage, to my love ; they pictured the agony my loss must have occasioned, they pictured the vain researches of my husband, and melted me into softness : every discordant passion slumbered, and wounded pride, outraged feeling, yielded to the more dangerous indulgence of anguish and regret.

My health sunk beneath sufferings so acute, so hopeless ; and, for many months, my life was despaired of. On recovering strength and memory, my ears were again assailed by the pious exordiums of the sisterhood : the sensuality of the world, its trials and its snares, its pursuits and its al-

lurements, placed in opposition to the unruffled calm of religion, and the hallowed joys of retirement, were themes so constant, so hackneyed, that, even now, memory sickens at the revisal, and turns, in disgust and horror, from a doctrine so fallacious: but vain were their efforts to call my thoughts from the world—love was an advocate which never slumbered, nature an impulse not to be subdued.—They had torn me from your arms, but they could not banish your image from my heart—no, my Eugenio; when bending at the altar of my God, you retained your station, you tintured the sigh, as it wafted up to Heaven.

‘The period of my novitiate drew towards a close; and the airy illusions of that hope, which, at times, had mocked even misery of a tear, closed in utter despondence. I beheld the preparations for my sacrifice, and yet I lived; I saw the morning dawn for my profession, and yet I retained my senses. Alas! to paint the scene

scene which succeeded baffles my weak efforts! my heart, shuddering at the recollection, refuses to dictate, and my pen to write. Dragged to the altar, half fainting, tottering, falling, my knees bent apparently in conformity to the mandate of the abbess, but they bent in weakness: the black veil hung over my head; she severed the thread by which it was suspended—it fell—I was a nun; I was professed, and lifeless I was borne from the chapel.—At the still hour of midnight, alone, wretched, I gazed around my cell; no hope of rescue, no passage of escape existed. My eyes fell upon the flowing tresses which, in the morning, had been severed; and passion, agony, grief, distraction, succeeded. Madly I tore off the veil; madly I called upon my protector, my lover, my husband; but no peace, no comfort, dawned upon a wretch so lost: sob gained but the responsive sob; from “walls whose echoes only learnt to groan.” Exhausted, powerless, I sunk upon my knees; I prayed for fortitude, for
D 6 resignation:

resignation : Heaven heard those prayers ; for tears came to my relief, and saved my brain from frenzy.

‘ Such, since that fatal period, has been the tenor of my life ; sometimes a visionary planning escape, and measuring with my eyes the height of the garden walls ; sometimes a penitent prostrating for mercy and forgiveness ; but, alas ! more often, a victim to sensibility and remembrance, yielding to the renovating ardour which glows within my lacerated bosom. Ah ! with such ideas, such advocates, judge then how slight the struggle to decide my destiny ! Yes, my Eugenio, I am still your own—still the yielding, trembling slave of sentiment : for you I dare snap the chains which bind me here ; for you I dare encounter danger, nay, death itself ; for you, ah ! for you, what would I not endure — Eugenio, the vow I breathed with you at the altar, still trembles on my lips, still glows unsubdued within my heart.

‘ PHILIPPINA.’

“ In

“ In all the ardour of tenderness, all the flow of gratified passion, I endeavoured, in reply, to indite the feelings my Philippina's letter had inspired. I, too, painted the anguish I had endured ; and talked of the inhuman father, who, to ambition, had sacrificed the feelings of nature, until I had almost forgotten I was his son : I, too, spurned at coercion, and treated the vows of compulsion as nugatory and unbinding. ‘ Heaven admits not the sacrifice,’ I wrote — ‘ no, my love ; the pure, the unbiassed wish of vestal holiness, must ascend, unclogged by regret, untinctured by one lingering thought of the world ; else is that wish futile, else is that offering unaccepted. You, my Philippina, could not, dared not breathe that wish, for you were married ; you could not be that offering, for your election was already made. Believe me then, no duty broken calls for reparation, in the step you are about to take—no, my lovely bride, ’tis courage, ’tis magnanimity, ’tis greatness of mind, to assert your independance,

independance, to renounce bondage. The passage for escape opens; fly, and take shelter in a husband's arms; fly from your detested prison, and, in realms more congenial to our nature, we will seek an asylum.'

"In the morning, though but for a moment, I again clasped my Philippina to my bosom; and her assurance of courage, of ceaseless love, fanned hope almost into certainty. During the three days in which, from pretended indisposition, I sojourned within the walls of Corpus Domini, our interviews were frequent, our epistolary correspondence unceasing: a thousand plans were proposed and rejected, plans which teemed with romance, with impossibility; but love, undaunted, scoffing at danger, persevered; and it was at length determined to bribe old Abdiel, the gardener of the convent, to our interest. I thought him humane; for, when lying at the gate, it was he who petitioned for my admission, who assisted me into the monastery:

tery: but Philippina, better versed in his character, asserted him weak and avaricious—he, then, was the proper tool for our purpose. ‘I will ply that master-passion,’ I exultingly exclaimed, in reply to the timid nun’s apprehensions, ‘until his very soul shall become our own;’ and from that period, diligently I sought to cultivate his acquaintance, to steal into his regard. Under pretended lassitude, and with a display of inanity foreign to my feelings, I continued at Fossombrone; where, by almost imperceptible advances, I obtained the hoped-for assistance of Abdiel, who became the ready messenger between Philippina and myself. At length, through the aid of that weighty argument, gold, I ventured to unfold my long-projected scheme. He started in horror; but, though he dared not assist in a crime so heinous as stealing a nun from her convent; yet he soon sufficiently compromised with his conscience, to propose leaving the back gate of the convent garden uncured,

cured, as if by accident, by which means Philippina might fly her prison, might effect her escape.

“ But a new difficulty, before unthought of, now occurred : alas ! where could we secrete ourselves from the vigilance of a search, which was with too much reason to be apprehended ? This new obstacle Abdiel himself obviated : ‘ In my youth,’ he exclaimed, ‘ I tended my father’s goats upon the mountain ; and, by accident, acquired the knowledge of a cave, or hollow, in its side, so overgrown with weeds and brushwood, as to conceal the entrance even from the most scrutinizing eye : there you may secrete yourselves until the pursuit slackens, and then, without fear, you may hasten from Fossombrone.’

“ Delighted with a plan which seemed at once to conquer every danger, I immediately took possession of my temporary dwelling ; and, by the assistance of Abdiel, in less than two days changed its aspect, from rude unforbidding wildness, to smiling

ing security and contented comfort. Ah ! with what joy did I hail the promised night of my Philippina's deliverance ! with what impatience did I linger near the convent, did I watch the door through which she was to burst upon my sight !—I heard the vesper-hymn float on the swelling breeze, I heard the mellow organ tremble beneath the last faint touch of piety—it paused, it died—the hour of devotion was past, and silence and darkness reigned around.—Philippina came, and my heart knew no discordant sigh : I conducted her to the cave, and that cave was paradise. For four whole days, love gave no place to fear, nor gratitude to dejection—the possibility of a reverse saddened not our spirits ; and while the puerile mind of Abdiel was working to our undoing, encouraging the deceiver-Hope, we knew no sentiment but joy. Prophetic Heaven ! it was on the morning of the fifth, as my Philippina slumbered on my bosom, that the horrors of monastic vengeance broke in all its fury :

fury: even now, even at this distant period of time, the remembrance rends my heart; overthrows my reason: yes; for that short; that fleeting era of bliss, what did we not endure!—Oh, Nature, Nature! how were thy ordinations profaned! thy laws subverted!”—The Duca paused, hid his face in his hands, and, for many minutes, yielded to his feelings: at length reviving, with a heart-rending sigh, he continued—“Every fond illusion was blasted, every latent hope destroyed—my wife, my Philippina, was torn a second time from my arms, was lost to me for ever.

“Insensible to the dungeon’s gloom into which, I have been told, I was plunged—insensible to every occurrence which marked the flight of time, distraction annihilated my faculties, and spared my brain the misery of retrospection. But temporary was the bliss of insensibility; the chaotic gloom of madness vanished, reason regained its powers, and I revived to all the horrors of the past.—On looking around,

around, I found myself within the walls of Montranzo, watched, attended, soothed by the hand of friendship. Tears of pleasure streamed down the cheeks of the Marchese, as he hailed the first accents of returning sanity; he sought to steal me from myself by every ameliorating office; and at length, in compliance with my entreaties, acquainted me with all that had transpired since the fatal moment of Philippina's loss. Alas! my beloved, my hapless wife, had been re-conducted to the monastery; and I, the wretched author of all her sorrows, shackled as a malefactor, and plunged into confinement, owed my enlargement to the interest of my family, and the exertions of my friend: yes, excellent, generous Di Montranzo, you hesitated not to leave your beloved partner, still drooping for the loss of her child, and fly to my succour. Fatal, wretched effort of regard!—those weeks of absence poisoned felicity, banished bliss.

“Anxious, by change of scene, to arouse
my

my mind from the torpid inanity into which it had fallen, the Marchese proposed my accompanying him to the villa; where, for the same purpose, a few months before, he had conducted the Marchesa. I heard the arrangement without pleasure, nay, without concern; my senses continuing in a state, which, though not absolutely insane, were far from rational.—Uncomplaining, unresisting, I quitted Di Montranzo, my every thought absorbed by Philippina, whose fate I had in vain essayed to discover. But, alas! a new scene of horror awaited to arouse me to exertion! My friend, my hapless friend, like me, was destined the sport of calamity and woe.

“As we approached the villa, as the carriage drove up the avenue, the Marchese, gazing eagerly from the window, suddenly started, suddenly breathed an exclamation of amazement and apprehension. My eyes, seeking the direction of his, fixed upon a kind of litter, borne slowly through the shrubbery. Pausing
not

not a moment, he burst open the door, sprung from the carriage, and fled towards it: intuitively I followed his footsteps, and reached the mourning, horror-struck group, in time to receive him senseless in my arms. Ah, Father of Heaven! what a tale reached my ears!—it was the departed form of the Marchesa, thus borne by her domestics, her snowy bosom stained by the steel of an assassin: yes, in spite of suspicion, in spite of the whispers of calumny, it must have been the steel of an assassin; innocence so pure, piety so angelic, dared not have aimed a blow so sacrilegious. 'Tis true she had drooped, she had desponded, for the loss of her child; but nature had given her fortitude, religion had given her resignation. Alas! I but recite the inferences of my own mind; for the mystery of her fate is still hid in darkness. From the housekeeper I heard, that, early in the afternoon, the Marchesa had quitted the villa alone, as was her usual custom,

custom, to walk in the grounds. She had been extremely low during the day—had talked much of her lost cherub—had wept its early doom. Alarmed at the unusual length of her absence, for hour succeeded hour without witnessing her return, the domestics sought her in the park, the gardens, the shrubbery—but sought her in vain; she answered not to their call, neither could the slightest trace of her retreat be discovered. Trembling, dismayed, not knowing how to act or what to conclude, the affrighted servants hastened up an alcove, which terminated in a small temple, the door of which was closed; but it yielded to their efforts. Entering, they beheld the murdered form of the Marchesa stretched upon the marble pavement, weltering in her blood. No instrument of destruction was near her: her veil was rent, and her handkerchief, roughly torn from her bosom, lay upon the floor. Futile was every search for the murderer; time unveiled
not

not the dark transaction ; hidden in the impenetrable folds of fate, it is yet to be discovered, it is yet to be avenged."

" Unfortunate, ill-fated being !" exclaimed Di Rinaldini, starting from an attitude of deep abstraction : " No instrument near her, say you ? Ah ! then it is evident murder had been busy ; for, had desperation aimed the blow of self-destruction, the weapon must have been seen."

" The weapon never was seen," resumed the Duca, " neither could the slightest trace of a footstep be discovered. The body of the murdered Marchesa was conveyed to the Castle di Montranzo, and interred in the family-vault."

" But the Marchese," said Huberto, as an involuntary tear marked his sympathy in the story.

" My unfortunate friend," rejoined the Duca, " distracted in mind, drooping in health, bereaved of every comfort in life, quitted a land so desolate—alas ! quitted
it

it for ever; for the vessel in which he sailed from Italy, was heard of no more. The Conte Alverani, in right of his wife, the sister of the late Marchese, took possession of the estates; for the lapse of years confirmed the supposition of his fate: and since that period, being a stranger to the Conte, I have not once visited the haunts of my youth. Judge then my feelings, when, recovering my recollection, I found myself beneath the roof of Montranzo."

"Then the death of the Marchese," said Huberto, musing, "has never been confirmed?"

"Not absolutely," replied the Duca; "though methinks eighteen years' absence a sufficient confirmation to smother hope, even in the most sanguine bosom. Long and anxiously did I picture his return; for, in the loss of Di Montranzo and Philippina, I alike became desolate in friendship and in love."

"Hapless Philippina!" sighed Di Rinaldini.

dini. "But did you never learn by what means the sisters of *Corpus Domini* discovered your retreat in the cavern?"

"It was through the puerile weakness of the wretch we trusted," rejoined the agitated Duca: "Abdiel heard the denunciations of the enraged sisterhood, and sunk under the bigotry of his nature; heard the Lady Abbess talk of purgatory and condemnation, till humanity, justice, gratitude, yielded to the fear of eternal torture. The curse of Heaven, he thought, would avenge a sacrilege so dreadful; the spouse of God stolen, as it were, from his bosom, rang a death-warrant to hope; and to save his soul, he severed the ties of wedded love, crushed the rich promises of happiness, plunged two confiding beings into misery, and shortened the days of the innocent, injured victim of religious fanaticism. Ah! surely, surely the Creator of the universe sanctions not a coercion so repugnant to every law of feeling and of nature! surely he approves not that nugatory

tory state of existence, which, by excluding the allurements of temptation, excludes likewise the pre-eminence of virtue, and stamps inactivity and self-denial the road to eternal peace !”

Yielding a moment to his feelings, the Duca rose from his chair and paced the chamber ; but presently recovering his self-command, he continued—“ My Philippina escaped the power of her tyrants, not, as heretofore, to be regained, but for ever ; she died, sweet saint ! and left me a mournful sojourner in this vale of tears ; she died, and with her every hope, save from religion. ’Tis true, many, many years have rolled away, since I witnessed the wreck of felicity ; but, alas ! memory presents it but as yesterday, and lingers with delusive fondness over the fleeting shadow.”

CHAP. III.

"The devil can cite scripture for his purpose."

.....

There's not a pain which age or sickness brings,

Is *half* so grievous as that the mind feels.

Rowe.

PLEASED with the society of Di Rinaldini, a fortnight elapsed ere the Duca di Monte Melissario proposed quitting Montranzo; and, even then, it was with a reluctance so sweetly grateful to the feelings of our hero, that he saw the intended dawn of departure break in the east, with an impulse of regret, which could alone claim birth in friendship. Feeling for the similarity of each other's misfortunes, imper-

E 2

ceptibly

ceptibly had interest grown into esteem, imperceptibly had interest given birth to a sensation, which whispered their hearts yet alive to the social influence of nature.— In the death of the Marchese di Montranzo, the Duca concluded the energies of friendship exhausted ; but there now arose a candidate not to be resisted, a candidate clothed in the resemblance of his departed friend, and stealing into his confidence.— “ Interesting young man,” he exclaimed, pressing, in the moment of adieu, the hand of Huberto, “ your misfortunes excite my compassion, your virtues my regard. Should ever the effects of hatred, malignancy, or revenge, which I still think instigates the seeming mysteries of Montranzo, by jaundicing the mind of superstition, work to your undoing, remember to claim, from my friendship, an alleviating balm—from my gratitude, an exertion of service.”

Di Rinaldini acknowledged his thanks,
though

though he acquiesced not in the suspicions of the Duca; he knew no being, whom, for a moment, imagination could blacken with an imputation so dreadful. 'Twas true, Father Brazilio had strongly opposed his marriage with Adelheida, but that warmth he concluded more to result from his interest in the aggrandizement of the Conte's family, than any lurking hatred towards himself: conscious that he had never offended, and judging by his own heart, he acquitted him of premeditated malice; and upon whom else could the accusation fall?

The Duca and his attendants had scarcely lost sight of Montranzo, when Vannina hastily joined Huberto, "Signor," she exclaimed, "it is all a pretence; Father Brazilio's mission has extended no further than his own cell."

"What mean you?" demanded Di Rinaldini.

"To talk so much of his calling, and his
B 3 occupation

occupation too!" pursued the half-angry Vannina—"Holy St. Rosolia! why, he said he was going barefooted, fasting and praying, to lay the ghost that haunts the Castle, and I, silly fool, believed all he said; nay, yesternoon, so strong was my faith, I ventured alone in the black marble hall:—if I had known Father Brazilio was at St. Romuald, not all the persuasions in the universe, no, not Benevento himself, should have led me thither."

"And yet you returned in safety," observed Huberto.

"True, Signor, the saints guard us! I returned in safety; because I thought the Father Confessor on his mission, and because, no thanks to his prayers, the spectre has ceased its perambulations."

"Would you imply, Vannina," asked Di Rinaldini, "that the power of man can restrict the designs of the Almighty? that the incantations of an erring mortal can erect a spell against immortal agency?"

"I, Signor, I—the blessed Virgin forbid!"

blushing, " his *Excelenzo* the Duca's attendant, Julio, called me pretty. Poor fellow ! gloomy and disconcerted, he wandered from the Castle, to make me uneasy, forsooth ; and in one of his rambles, at the door of a poor miserable hovel, he met the monk coming from——"

" The monk !" interrupted Di Rinaldini.

" Mother of God !" ejaculated Vannina, " what have I said ?—The monk, Signor—that is—that is—Alack-the-day ! Benevento will never forgive me ! He said it was a secret, and I promised not to divulge it."

" A secret, and entrusted to you !" observed Huberto ; " had Benevento wished it to remain one, surely he would not have made you his confidante."

" I can keep a secret ; I have kept a secret before now," rejoined Vannina, in a voice of pique.

" Fear me not, my good girl," said Huberto ; " I will not betray you."

" Won't you, Signor ? won't you tell Benevento ?

Benevento? Why then, he met Father Brazilio at the door——”

“Remember your promise,” interrupted Di Rinaldini.

“Oh! I must tell you, because it is so strange; besides, Benevento won’t know a word of it. Well, he met Father Brazilio at the door, and he was quite amazed, not to say alarmed; for, the saints keep him! he thought, as I should, that it was an apparition, and that the friar had been murdered, or died on his mission. White as a sheet, poor Benevento fell upon his knees, and murmured his paternoster; and not till the monk told him he was indeed alive, could he be persuaded to rise.”

“Tis strange!” said Huberto—“What could be his motive?”

“Ah! not so strange as what followed,” rejoined Vannina; “for before they parted, the monk made Benevento promise not to disclose that he had met him; for, he said, he wished you, Signor, and all the in-

habitants of Montranzo, to conclude him on his mission."

"Is that all?" questioned Di Rinaldini.

"He said," pursued Vannina, "that he had been unexpectedly delayed, but that he should soon go to Fossombrone; and then he enquired how long his *Excelenzo* the Duca would remain at Montranzo? and whether any thing new had transpired?"

"And what was the reply of Benevento?"

"Oh, Signor! Benevento said he wished the Duca di Monte Melissario had never come, because he hated strangers at the Castle; and then he told him how the spirit had terrified his *Excelenzo*, and filled us all with consternation; and Father Brazilio crossed himself, and prayed, and said he feared something was very wrong; but that Heaven would yet unravel the mystery, and return the measure of guilt on the head of the perpetrator. Benevento, terrified, enquired who was the perpetrator, and what he meant? and then, by way

5

way of explanation, he said, the Lady Adelheida——”

“ Forbear, forbear, Vannina !” interrupted the agitated Huberto ; “ spare me the anguish of retrospection. Alas ! ’tis as the knell of fate, inflicting over again the bleeding wounds of the heart ! Once did the illusive joy of hope dance around my pillow, once—but too soon has the magic spell vanished ; too soon has it closed in despondency and woe.”

“ Pardon me, Signor, ’tis seldom I speak of my beloved Lady : but the monk——”

“ The monk ?” eagerly demanded Di Rinaldini ; “ what said the monk of my Adelheida ?”

“ He said,” replied Vannina, “ that the death of the Signora could not be natural, because—but you are pale, you can scarcely stand. Excuse me, Signor ; why should I dwell on a tale so replete with horror ?”

“ Because—why ?” importuned Huberto ; “ in mercy, Vannina, explain the cause !”

R G

“ Because,”

"Because," faltered the distressed girl, "the body was so carefully screened from every eye; and Father Brazilio says, the noises and appearances which haunt the Castle, must be the perturbed wanderings of a spirit, calling, as it were, for retribution: and the servants all think the Signora died of—of——"

"Of what?"

"Of poison, Signor."

Huberto shuddered—for a moment he seemed lost in thought; but presently turning to Vannina, in a voice of recovered firmness, he continued—" 'Tis true, the quiet of my domestic establishment is broken; but whether the sounds are, or are not supernatural, remain to be proved. I could wish the idle conjectures of superstition to be more limited, or, at least, confined to a channel of probability."

"Stay, Signor," implored Vannina, following him to the chamber-door, "stay; and once more assure me, that Benevento shall

shall never know my breach of confidence."

"My word has passed, Vannina," replied Di Rinaldini, "and my word has ever been inviolate."

"Alas!" sighed Vannina, "that is a tacit reproof to me. I have been wrong, very wrong, Signor, and my heart fails me; I have broken a confidence I had promised to preserve, and I feel myself unworthy of future trust."

"I did not mean it a reproof, my poor girl," rejoined Huberto; "in the eager wish, of serving me, you forgot the limitation of your promise: rest assured, Benevento shall never know of the oversight; and let the intention frame an excuse for the act."

"Save you, my son!" exclaimed Father Brazilio, meeting Di Rinaldini in the path leading to the Camaldoli Convent: "Returned to the duties of my calling, I was hastening to Montranzo, to offer my fervent
vent

vent wishes for the amendment of your health and spirits."

Huberto coldly thanked him : the monk continued—" The hours of my absence have been hours of toil ; the world, glorying in its wickedness, holds forth a picture of encreasing dissoluteness, and makes piety shrink into retirement, as into a place of safety. Alas ! man scoffs at every effort of virtue, and travels, with labour and sorrow, the path to destruction."

" Then the world hides not, beneath a specious guise of truth, the laxity of its morals, and the profligacy of its example," observed Di Rinaldini ; " the world draws not on the guileless heart in the smiling semblance of innocence, when treachery and malice lurk beneath ; the world possesses depravity, but not hypocrisy."

A transient frown lowered on the dark brows of the confessor ; stedfastly he gazed
on

on Huberto, as he replied—"Not to the eye of experience, but, trust me, to the effervescing passions of youth, it bears a delusive picture: beauty, splendour, dissipation, court on to vice; and sensuality, and a year of riot, closes in an age of pain. 'Tis in such a sanctuary as St. Romuald's, that the soul can rest in safety; 'tis there that temptation loses the power to harm; 'tis there that the mind engenders nought but purity."

"Is every baleful passion excluded the walls of St. Romuald? does nature change with the garb of holiness his followers assume?" asked Di Rinaldini; "does humanity resign its struggles? Say, father, does disguise and hatred, does malice and policy, never sway the actions of a Camaldoli brother?"

"The heart of a man lies hid," replied the monk; "his actions, not his motives, speak: 'tis hard to judge, but harder still to condemn."

"True; but circumstances, father."

"The

"The Virgin forbid," pursued the confessor, apparently unmindful of the interruption, "that the cowl and scapular should veil the carnal passions of the world!—no, my son; at St. Romuald's, like an unruffled stream, time glides smoothly on; no unhallowed sigh mocks the reign of piety, no hostile wishes thwart the service of God: at its gate the burden of sin is cast down; and on its altars are offered up the prayers of réparation, the meek incense of devotion: to a heart lacerated like yours, a heart severed from every worldly tie, a heart bleeding with wounds which defy even the balm of time to ameliorate, what office can be more gratifying, can be more soothing? Religion, like the honied dew of heaven, will appease its anguish; will turn its murmurs into thankfulness, its discontent into resignation."

"Proceed, father," said Di Rinaldini, as yet scarcely able to fathom the drift of his words.

"I have

“ I have long pined to staunch the tears which calamity hath extorted,” pursued the confessor ; “ I have long pitied the extreme of sensibility, which, like a drooping flower, has bent you to the earth. Alas ! my young friend, you were not made for the world ; there the lynx-eye of experience can scarcely discern the shoals and quicksands by which it is surrounded ; there interest sways the actions of mankind, and dissimulation stalks unguessed at.”

“ Dissimulation !” repeated Huberto, his eyes rivetted on the monk.

“ Think then,” resumed Father Brazilio, “ how would its treachery affect your too-sensitive mind ! how would its ingratitude break your spirit !”

“ Its treachery and its ingratitude are alike beyond my reach,” said Huberto ; “ buried in these mountains, the one will not seek me ; the other poisons not its object, but recoils upon itself.”

“ Ah, my son, how futile are your conclusions ! Treachery scoffs at every effort
of

of resistance, 'creeps into the easy-hearted man, and hugs him into snares:' not the deep solitude of Montranzo, not the unfrequented passes of the Appennines, can boast a safeguard against its entry."

"And yet," pointedly observed Di Rinaldini, "the Convent of St. Romuald is exempt."

"Because," rejoined the friar, "its barricado is religion, and its security confidence: Heaven tempers the hearts of its brethren; and every wish, every sigh, is swayed by purity. Some, from disgust, have flown the converse of their fellow-creatures; some have been driven by the gales of misfortune; some owe to caprice an exclusion from the world, others to the sacred call of devotion; but all alike have found what they sought—all alike, with the monastic habit, have obtained repose and peace. You were a husband—you are a widower; you are childless and alone, with too much soul to squander the bounty of affection, the inheritance of charity—

too

too much heart to seek a successor to Adelheida, and to love : by becoming a brother of our order, no duty will be broken, no tie neglected ; the stings of sorrow will insensibly subside, the arrow of calamity be extracted : Heaven will smile upon the offering ; Heaven will receive the pious votary, who, forswearing all sublunary interests, enrolls himself beneath a banner, which boasts no charm but Christian charity and meek-eyed resignation. I will leave you, my son, to reflect upon a proposition apparently so little expected."

He was striking from the path, when Huberto, snatching his cloak, restrained him—" Stay, father," he exclaimed, " the proposition requires no reflection. 'Tis true, misfortune has embittered my peace ; 'tis true, I am widowed, isolated, forlorn ; but inclination points not to the cowl ; in solitude I would dwell, but not in a cloister. While Adelheida reigns triumphant in my soul, the pure essence of piety cannot ascend

ascend to Heaven ; her image would tincture the midnight vigil ; and steal my thoughts from devotion ; her name would vibrate on the chord of memory, and turn to regret and dissatisfaction the holiness of prayer. No ; while Adelheida, while love retain their influence, I cannot be a Camaldoli brother ; and when Adelheida, when love are forgotten, I shall have ceased to breathe."

The monk snatched his cloak from the hold of Di Rinaldini ; he glanced on him a look of mingled scorn, disappointment, and malignancy : " I would have saved you," he muttered, " but you choose your own fate ; I would have been your guide to peace," recovering himself, " but you reject my offers of service. But perhaps," with the forced smile of returning meekness, " my interest for your welfare may have betrayed me into warmth ; perhaps, when alone, when unbiassed, the influence of spiritual may surmount carnal objections ;

tions ; perhaps I may yet be to the Father Abbot the happy messenger of a joyful embassy."

" Not while reason and passion coincide," said Huberto mildly.

" Farewell, then !" rejoined Father Brazilio ; " I go to pray for the extirpation of the latter, the conviction of the former."

Di Rinaldini continued his original bent, nor again paused, till he had gained the gate of the monastery : he reflected on the conduct of the monk, and concluded it the effects of sordid interest, knowing him to be acquainted with the written document of the Conte Alverani, in which, at the decease of Huberto, in default of an heir, he bequeathed to St. Romuald his estates and rich possessions—" Merciful Heaven !" he apostrophized, " can a being so frail, so surreptitious, bend his knee before thy altar, and acquit his conscience of guilt ? or perhaps, carried away by the mistaken bigotry of zeal, he fancies virtue consists in

in enriching the treasury of his order, in emblazoning the sacristy with the rich gems of wealth—the wages of deception.”

He found the canon slowly pacing a low terrace which bound the convent garden, his feeble steps supported by a staff, and the arm of the humane Father Giacomo.

“Welcome, my son!” he articulated, extending his emaciated hand; “I was thinking—I was speaking of you. This is the first day that I have inhaled the reviving freshness of heaven’s atmosphere, and your presence, my esteemed young friend, was a cordial balm my spirits sighed for.”

Di Rinaldini, gratefully pressing the hand to his lips, breathed the congratulations his heart offered.

“I know not,” continued the canon, “whether disease or age has blunted the powers of memory; but, from the moment
of

of my seizure, time holds forth a blank space, unmarked by one single occurrence; not even the assiduities of your regard, which, Father Giacomo tells me, led you so often to my wretched pallet, being recorded."

"Excuse me, father," exclaimed the lay brother, resigning to the charge of Huberto the arm of the canon; "yonder goes the Father Abbot; I wish to see him, ere we meet in the chapel;" and, passing down the steps of the terrace, he joined the superior.

Thus left alone, Di Rinaldini related the circumstances which, during the illness of his preceptor, had transpired at Montranzo; but no visible alteration marked the features of the canon, until he pronounced the name of the Duca di Monte Melissario; then a palsied start, and an exclamation of amazement, burst from his lips.

Huberto paused involuntarily; but the
canon,

canon, with convulsive earnestness, implored him to proceed: "Di Monte Melisario at Montranzo!" he faltered, and then threw a wild look to heaven.

Almost breathless, he listened to the agitation of the Duca, on recognising the Castle; but when Huberto spoke of the resemblance which he affirmed to subsist between his departed friend the Marchese and himself, the emotion of Father Luitfrido amounted to an extreme of agony: he gazed stedfastly on the countenance of the relator; tears streamed down his pallid cheeks, and sighs swelled his tortured bosom—"Powers of mercy!" he exclaimed, "shield me from an indulgence so dangerous!"

"Shield you, father?" demanded Huberto: "Ah! what may your words imply? Why should the name of the Duca, why should the name of the Marchese, so deeply affect you?"

"Proceed, my son; question me not,
but

but tell me, did Di Monte Melissario dwell on the last moments of his residence at Montranzo? did he mourn the fate of his Philippina? and——”

“ His Philippina !” interrupted Di Rinaldini: “ you know then the history of the Duca; you know then the fatal transactions which banished him the arms of love, which severed the ties of friendship.”

“ I know—blessed Mary ! yes,” mournfully, “ I know all that he suffered; I knew—but no matter,” checking himself. —“ Did he tell you,” he resumed, after a pause, “ when, flying from thought, he visited the villa di Novara, what devastation, what horror reigned around? Did he tell you, Di Montranzo received not the last groan of his wife?—Say,” trembling, gasping, “ did he tell you she was—murdered ?”

“ He told me,” said Huberto, “ that the body of the Marchesa was borne through the shrubbery at the moment of their approach ;

proach; that the distracted husband, for months, held not up his head; that the world said the Marchesa drooped at the loss of her child, and, in an hour of despondence, closed an existence which had become burdensome; that——”

“ ’Tis false !” interrupted the canon ;
“ her hand aimed not the blow of death—
oh, no ! resignation, virtue, piety, reigned
in her bosom, and barred the deed. God
of omnipotence ! a self-destroyer !—Un-
happy mother of an ill-fated babe ! miser-
able partner of an injured husband !—’Tis
true, the loss of her boy overthrew her spi-
rits, but not her reason; a ruffian hand
tore him from the vain resistance of his
nurse ; she saw a dagger pointed at his in-
nocent throat ; not his smiles, not his ca-
resses, not his endearments, could save him
—he too was murdered ; for the mangled
remains, the bloody mantle, found in a
neighbouring wood, bespoke the fatal con-
firmation. Thus perished the expectations
of a noble house ; thus were the parents’
hopes

hopes destroyed, thus the reign of their felicity blasted. In vain the wretched father sought to discover the secret murderer of his heir; wrapt in the cloak of mystery, the ruthless villain escaped even the breath of suspicion, and lived to strike another dagger as sure, lived to pierce the heart he had already wounded."

The canon clung to the shoulder of Di Rinaldini; sobs swelled his bosom, and tears chased each other down his cheeks—"Yes, Di Montranzo lost the prop of his age," he faltered, "and, three years after, the solace of his life; Di Montranzo dragged from prosperity, and——" Fearfully he paused.—"Alas! whither am I wandering? Let us return to my cell, my son; the air is keen; or perhaps," with a sigh of anguish, "perhaps 'tis my feelings; sickness has rendered me incapable of endurance, has cramped the energy of exertion."

Huberto led him from the terrace, and, as they proceeded towards the monastery, strove to recal his mind from torturing reflection, by acquainting him with the zealous persuasions of Father Brazilio, for his becoming a brother of their order.

The canon, with astonishment, listened to the arguments which the friar had educes : " It is a mistaken hypothesis," he exclaimed—" happiness dwells not in a cloister's security. If the world has lost the charms of peace, trust me the cowl will not recal them ; no, my beloved pupil, my amiable, my esteemed young friend, forbearance excludes not memory, devotion excludes not sorrow. Fatally can I assert, that content flies the efforts of a Camaldoli brother ; that grief, that anguish, that despair, mock his boasted empire over feeling."

" And yet," observed Di Rinaldini, " you took the cowl, you relinquished the converse of the world."

" I took

"I took the cowl from compulsion," rejoined the canon; "to escape a slavery more dire, I became a member of St. Romuald. 'Tis a tale would awaken your indignation, and claim your pity; but I dare not breathe it; guarded by a solemn oath, it rankles on the bleeding tablet of memory, but reaches not my lips; oh, no! it will never reach them; for I have sworn in life to preserve it—in life, only life—mark that, my son; in death, it will be divulged."

Again his agitation, mounting to a height which threatened sanity, called forth the apprehension of Huberto; gently he soothed his anguish; nor, till he had conducted him to his cell, till he had relinquished him to the care of Father Giacomo, did he return to the Castle.

In the monotony of time, unmarked by any particular occurrence, twelve months

of Di Rinaldini's widowhood elapsed.— Montranzo, still in conformity to his feelings, retained its mourning garb of sable ; nor echoed to the roar of laughter, or the burst of cheerfulness : still did the smothered tale of suspicion pass from domestic to domestic ; still did the deserted chambers partially reverberate the incongruous sounds of mystery, the food of superstition. The sonorous tones of the organ had been thrice heard ; and, on the anniversary of the Lady Adelheida's decease, a bell from the eastern turret was heard to toll, and a loud shriek, when midnight's gloom enveloped the Castle, echoed from the oratory. —No tidings of the Conte Alverani had crowned the enquiries of our hero ; the monk Brazilio's visits became less frequent ; and, save the mild converse of the canon, none but hirelings surrounded him. A deep despondency, a universal melancholy, succeeded the first burst of sorrow for the loss of Adelheida, and, gradually sinking into

into that state in which the soul shrinks from the past, and piously dwells on futurity, he, with uncomplaining fortitude, awaited the summons, when fate should close his sufferings, and his life.

CHAP. IV.



But let a *youth* thy pity share,
Whom *grief* has taught to stray ;
Who seeks for rest, but finds despair
Companion of *his* way.

GOLDSMITH.

It was in the mild and balmy evening of a cloudless day, that Di Rinaldini, wandering, unattended, from the Castle, beheld the refulgent rays of the sun sinking gradually in the bosom of the Appennines : he paused, for its mellow radiance spread over this nether world a golden splendour ; nature seemed to rest—no buz of insects filled the spicy gale ; no longer did

The

The bee *stray* diligent,

Or, with the extracted balm of fragrant woodbine,

Fill his little thigh."

Montranzo was no longer visible; its turretted towers were excluded from the sight, by the perpendicular and fantastic forms of wild, savage, pathless precipices, over which none, save the light-footed chamois, could bound his course. Here and there the white foam of impetuous torrents burst from beetling, shelving rocks, and, rolling headlong down, was lost in the mazy verdure of aromatic shrubs, and sombre evergreens; now, in a transparent, rapid stream, it again broke forth; now laving the roots of the towering pride of the forest, and now, checked, irritated by stones rolled by the concussions of nature, bubbling up in wild, but picturesque fountains.

"Oh God!" murmured Huberto, as his thoughts, wandering from his own peculiar sorrows, glowed with the vivid incense of grateful rapture, "matchless and omniscient

scient Architect ! what is man, the ungrateful infringer of thy laws, that, with the parent-tenderness of forgiving mercy, thou upholdest him in the weakness of humanity, giving to his feet a carpet, to his head a canopy !”

He started ; for, a little distance above him, in a flinty, shelving path, winding in almost perpendicular steepness, he beheld a youth, “ clad in pilgrim’s weeds,” labouring to attain the summit. Gazing, he shuddered at a situation which, a few minutes before, had been his own—never, till now, had it appeared perilous : a chilling sensation of apprehension crept over his heart ; for the rock which now sustained him, seemed to yawn over the roaring cataract.

Di Rinaldini pursued the agile step of the traveller, wondering at the temerity which, assisted by a staff, had nearly reached the Alpine summit. “ Merciful God !” he ejaculated ;

ejaculated ; for the treacherous footing had given way, and, with a shriek of wild horror, the stranger must have been precipitated into the depth profound, had not our hero, with the bounding velocity of a dart, sprung forward, and received him in his arms. Pale, terrified, exhausted, the pilgrim hung upon the shoulder of Huberto, who paused not till he attained the summit of the mountain's brow ; and then, placing him gently on the thymy sward, flew to a neighbouring rill, and, with his hat, robbing the liquid mirror, again approached his charge.

Already recovered from the stupor of sudden dread, the youth had arisen ; and, in the overflowing of a grateful heart, pressed to his lips the hand of his preserver : " But for you, Signor, but for you, Mother of God," he exclaimed, " my sorrows, with my life, had ceased."

" Sorrows ! and so young !" said Di Rinaldini, impelled by sympathy towards one

who already acknowledged himself a brother in misfortune—"Alas! is it fate, or is it the exorbitant desires of romantic wishes, which give to disappointment a name?"

"I am a wanderer," murmured the pilgrim, meekly crossing his hands on his bosom, breathing a heavy sigh, and raising his eyes to heaven.

"Have you then no home?"

"Yes—*there*;" and he pointed upwards.

"And *here*," articulated Di Rinaldini, entering at once into his allusion, "*here* also shall you find a resting-place."

The youth sank upon his knees: "Holy Virgin!" he ejaculated, devoutly kissing the cross impending from his neck, "holy Virgin, receive the grateful homage of a soul alive only to thy mercy! But for thy interposing hand, stretched forth in the person of this my preserver, where now had been thy fervent votarist? where now——" He paused; his eyes from heaven

even rested on Huberto, from him were directed to the abyss, which so recently yawned a terrific grave.

Amazement, admiration, filled the heart of Di Rinaldini, as he viewed the slim, graceful form of the pilgrim, to which the attractive animation of a countenance of true Italian *contour*, added peculiar interest. A wavy profusion of ebon hair, parting on his high, polished forehead, strikingly adorned the beauty of his fine oval face ; over which the dappled glow of health, mocking the inroads of pensive sadness, stamped her rich spring, and added a brilliancy of expression to a pair of large black eyes, scarcely needing the power of language to declare the quick revolving movements of the soul.

“ You are a wanderer,” mildly observed Huberto, as he led towards Montranzo ;
“ may I then enquire from whence you
come,

come, and whither points the bent of your pilgrimage?"

"I fly from a scene of sorrow," murmured the youth; "I seek the goal of peace."

"Who pointed to these mountains?" mournfully demanded Di Rivaldini.

"The spirit of inspiration," replied the pilgrim.

Huberto smiled.

"No baleful passions can here engender," pursued the youthful devotee; "shut out from the eyes of man, and alive only to the omnipotence of his Creator, the heart surely will not, cannot, dare not, wander beyond where the eye can reach."

Huberto turned aside his head.

"Ah! I see it does, it can," gazing on the averted face of his companion; "here,
even

even here, virtue and happiness are not compatible."

Di Rinaldini sighed—a tear marked the truth of the suggestion; but, quickly regaining composure, "Sought you the shelter of the Camaldoli fathers?" he enquired; "or why, alone and unguarded, did I see you exploring the dangerous passes of the Appennines?"

"Last night," resumed the pilgrim, "in a muleteer's hut, I snatched from fatigue a few hours repose."

"But the morning preceding?" questioned Huberto.

"Ah, Signor!" wiping away the tears which memory extorted—"ah, Signor! the morning preceding, I heard the low reverberating knell of death toll the departure of my only friend; the morning preceding, I saw——"

"Well; but the muleteer's hut?" interrupted Di Rinaldini, hurt at having vibrated the chord of his sorrows.

“ True, Signor; weary, and sick at heart, the muleteer’s hut gave to my aching head a resting-place, and to my eyes a scene of humble comfort, and domestic bliss. Plenty was spread around; Industry, her parent, smiled on the waving olive-ground, and rich empurpled clusters of a little vineyard. Two infants, beauteous as the first ray of morning, sported on the flower-bespangled green; while, at the door, sheltered, by a rude porch, from the evening air, as well as from the morning sun, chanting the hymn to the Virgin, sat the watchful mother. I paused, to contemplate this interesting assemblage; my heart was full, at the recollection of the scene I had fled; and, as I leant on my staff, the softened attribute of wounded sensibility fell from my eyes to the ground: ‘ Yes,’ I ejaculated, as, unobserved, I maintained my position, ‘ the tranquillity of such a retreat, the exertion of necessary industry, analyze the properties of the heart, and take

take from the mind the corroding envy of emulation.'

"But a heart must sympathize," observed Huberto, gazing stedfastly on the blushing cheek of his young companion; "or, perish the picture of bliss!"

"True, Signor; selfish is the wish for monopoly: the mendicant and the sorrowing should close the perspective, and then——"

"There would be something wanting," interrupted Di Rinaldini.

The stranger started.

"Love," murmured Huberto, as the remembrance of past scenes heightened the glow upon his features, "love must complete the paradise."

"Love," faltered the pilgrim, and a momentary pause ensued—"I listened to the sweet wild notes of grateful piety," continued the youth, an animating blush irradiating his countenance; "and, when the
vesper-

vesper-hymn was concluded, approached, and supplicated shelter for the night. The hand of compassion was extended, the voice of hospitality bid me welcome; the door of the cottage was thrown open, and the simple fare of moderation produced.— Sweet was the milk which the hand of Lilla presented! it was like ambrosial nectar to my senses; it was the boon of kindness, the offering of compassion: long had my ears been strangers to their thrilling sounds, long had my heart been chilled by the icy blast of unkindness. One beauteous cherub slumbered on the tender bosom of its mother, the other sported at her feet— Ah, God! for ever could I have gazed upon the delightful picture; but not with calmness—alas, no!—my eyes were suffused in tears, my heart throbbed even to bursting. I had never known a mother's love, my helplessness had never been fostered by a mother's care; thrown upon the wide world, compassion had been my preserver, and the convent—the—the——”
hesitating,

hesitating, "and the charity of beneficence my sanctuary."

"You are an orphan, then?" said Di Rinaldini, sighing at this epitome of his own life.

"I am the child of mystery," replied the stranger.

"Then, henceforth you are my brother; for I, too, have no natural claims."

"Brother!" with a wild shriek, exclaimed the pilgrim—"Brother!—Oh! dear and first acknowledged tie!—Brother!"

"Yes," murmured Huberto; "for, are you not an outcast from misfortune?"

"True," mournfully—"But the cottage, and Lilla, Signor."

"Proceed, my young enthusiast," forcing a smile—"I remember all: tired of the world, and guided by misanthropy, your footsteps sought these mountains."

"Happy, grateful, thrilling was the scene, which the dusk of twilight ushered!" proceeded the pilgrim, regardless of the allusion of Huberto: "Galiaze, the husband
and

and the father, attending some travellers to Fossombrone, had been absent from the break of dawn; and when his well-known step sounded on the threshold of the cottage-door, then—oh, then!” raising his glowing eyes to the face of his preserver, and forgetting at once the doctrine of forbearance, “what a scene ensued for the lover of nature! Lilla sprung to the arms of her bosom’s lord; and the children, the dear pledges of hallowed love, struggled, in tender dalliance, for the pre-eminence of a father’s blessing.—Oh, Signor! in that cottage I beheld happiness so vivid, so fascinating, that my soul spurned at the vile influence of tyranny, and——”

“The cottage was alone remembered,” concluded Di Rinaldini, pitying the modest blushing diffidence of the youth.

“I passed the night beneath the venturino’s humble roof,” pursued the pilgrim, “secure from pursuit, and rocked in the cradle of fatigue.”

“From pursuit!” repeated Huberto.

The

The stranger turned pale; he grasped the arm of Di Rinaldini, and, in broken accents, articulated—"Yes, from pursuit. You have saved my life; do more—hide me from recognition. Oh! did you but know all, you would complete the work begun—you would uphold, you would save me."

"I will," said Huberto solemnly: "in yon castle," pointing to the towers of Montranzo, "you may rest in safety, poor forlorn one!—to the wretched, to the destitute, it has before been a home: there you will find security, there you may claim protection."

"And there," murmured the pilgrim, "I will pray for its Lord. Sure, 'twas fate, 'twas Heaven's own hand, which guided me from the beaten tract. Had I followed the directions of my kind host, had I left the Castle to the right, possibly I had fallen into the snares of my persecutors; possibly, before to-morrow's dawn, I had been dragged to the footstool of offended power;

I had

I had beheld all my rich expectations, all my blooming hopes, blasted ; I had beheld my long, long life, destined to slavery—to endless woe."

" Surely," observed Di Rinaldini, " the hearts of fiends could not form revenge so deadly."

" Yes," warmly replied the stranger, " and they would name that revenge *virtue*. Oh ! you know not the wiles of man ; you know not the wicked, wicked artifice, of which the soul is capable. In these mountains, innocence blooms unchecked by tyranny and fraud ; in these mountains, the bud of happiness knows not the withering blast of treachery.—What have I said ?" gazing on the almost-convulsed features of his companion.

" You have rived my heart," articulated Huberto—" no, no ; not you," beholding the tear-surcharged eyes of the pilgrim, " but calamity. Where is the spot that shall exclude the pang of sorrow, the arrow of sin ? These mountains ? No : where man is,

is, there is affliction ; where he is not, there is innocence.—But your persecutors, poor youth ; tell me their names, and the extent of their power.”

“ That is my *secret*,” faltered the pilgrim.

“ Preserve it then,” rejoined Di Rinaldini ; “ I would not wrest it from you : but your own—is that too a secret ? must I only know you by the term *friend* ? ”

“ My own, Signor,” hesitating ; “ my own is—is—Isidore,” and the softest blush mantling his downy cheek, “ is the name I claim.”

Huberto extended his hand : “ Isidore,” he exclaimed, “ fellow-sojourner in affliction, friendship is a lenient balm my heart may cherish ; henceforth I claim your interest.”

“ Hope is not dead,” whispered the pilgrim, in accents of melting softness ; “ no,” with a look of resistless sweetness, snatching the hand of Di Rinaldini to his lips,
“ from

"from the grave does she arise, and put forth the sweetest blossoms!—Ah! little did I think, when, with bitter tears, I watered thy cold hier, Eusebia, that my heart would so soon claim kindred!"

"Eusebia!" sighed Huberto—"Alas! poor, poor Isidore! you too can echo sigh for sigh; you too have lost the fondly-selected partner of your life; you too have felt the dire transition from joy to misery!"

"No; never, never!" eagerly—"joy entered not my dwelling: dissatisfaction and regret have been my portion through life. Alas! its walls echoed the sighs of anguish, the sobs of despair. I heard them; I gave all I had to bestow—my pity; but I—I was left to feel my own. I knew no participator in my sorrows, no commiserating bosom on which I could unburden my woes, save Eusebia's; and death marbled it in the very moment she strove to aid me: yes, I lost my friend," sobbing, "and the world was a blank to me."

"That loss gave birth to forbearance
and

and misanthropy," said Di Rinaldini; "that loss directed your steps to the Appennine wilds; for your heart shut out society, and disappointment poisoned the converse of man. But, in the venturino's cottage, in the caresses Lilla bestowed on her innocent cherubs, the force of nature returned; you thought of the young, the beauteous Eusebia, and your heart revived a feeble pulsation, like love."

"You have mistaken my feelings," eagerly exclaimed the blushing Isidore: "love, Signor, has known no entrance here," placing his hand upon his breast. "I revered the transcendent virtues of Eusebia; I thought her the most perfect being upon earth; I opened my whole soul to her inspection: her words, like softest balm, allayed every tumult, and taught me to seek for happiness above. 'Twas to the Throne of Grace I addressed myself, and my prayers were heard: peace, tranquillity, composure, came at her approach; to me she was the dispenser of good, for she

inspired me with the precious impulse of true piety—she taught my dearest hopes to rest on Heaven. Eusebia's pure soul knew but one love; and of him, in early life, by tyranny, was she bereft."

"In early life!" repeated Huberto.

"Yes," answered Isidore—"You seem surprised, Signor; believe me, it was not the glowing lip of beauty which gained my credence, which stole upon my heart—ah, no!—the head of my friend was bleached with many winters; age had robbed her of her bloom, but not her sweetness; age had rifled her charms, but not her mind. When first she entered the——" he checked himself, raised his finger to his forehead, as if to remember, and then resumed—"When she deprived society of the matchless charms of her conversation, by shrinking into retirement, nature could not have produced a more finished model of female loveliness. I have heard the—I have heard her companions say, she looked, like the mountain-lily surcharged with dew; for her

her head drooped upon her bosom, and her eyes were humid with the tears of woe.—But her beautiful hair!—Oh, Signor! she—she—when I knew her,” faltering, “ her hair was grey.”

"You saw not then the meridian blaze of her perfections?" asked Di Rinaldini.

“ No, Signor : in my eyes, her external perfections were faded ; but, in my heart, her internal perfections glowed.”

"In your heart, Isidore?"

“ Yes, in my heart,” pursued the pilgrim ; “ for, on her tender bosom has she often hushed me.”

"She knew you, then, an infant?"

“She knew me, Signor, ere I knew myself. But when she died—oh, holy Mary! never shall I forget the majestic serenity, the celestial expression of her features!—she looked as an angel, pointing to that heaven she would share with all mankind.”

"It was of her life, Isidore, I thought you were about to tell me."

"True, Signor," dashing away a truant
62 tear;

tear ; " her life was a scene of trial ; but whose life is not ? " mournfully.

Huberto crossed his hands on his bosom, and sighed.

" The early dawn of the sainted Eusebia's existence was enriched with the blessed sunshine of parental affection ; for her sorrows and her joys found a resting-place in a father's heart : no cares obtruded, no pangs intervened ; innocent was her soul, and all her thoughts were peace. 'Twas then that love stole into the rich casket of her bosom ; 'twas then he rifled all her sighs, and smiled at the havoc he had made. A hero in arms, a gallant defender of his country, was the chosen object of her romantic wishes : fate was still propitious : her father blessed their union, then died, and wrung from her heart the first bitter tears of sorrow. Scarce had she raised her orphan head from the cold grave of her parent, when duty's harsh mandate summoned

summoned to a distant corner of the globe, and banished her the local ties of kindred and of home. Guarded by a husband's arms, she sailed on the turbulent ocean; the light skiff scudded before the breeze, and left, but to the busy eye of memory, the joyous prospect of land. Rough as the element over which the vessel glided, was the heart of the commander; he pitied not the feminine weakness of my friend—alas! how could he? for, in his breast, the meek-eyed maid could find no harbour.

“ The vessel touched at ———; duty detained the husband of Eusebia on board, but necessity urged her landing. Rich in the purchased necessities for a prolonged voyage, in a hired boat, she pushed from land; swift did its course cut through the briny flood, swift did hope picture her return to her husband: in vain did her anxious eyes wander over the ocean's curling wave, in vain did it seek its destined harbour of rest; alas! in the few hours of her

absence, a quick breeze had started from the south : deaf to the distracted pleadings of love, deaf to the calls of humanity, the order for sailing was given ; the anchor was heaved—the vessel left her moorings : and as Eusebia, standing in the boat, strained her tortured gaze, she beheld the white furl of its sails lessened almost to a speck. Hope dilated her heart ; her prayers, her tears, her entreaties, were renewed : ‘ Gain but yon vessel,’ she exclaimed, ‘ and the God of mercy will bless the effort ! — Restore me to my protector, and, wafted by the softest breath of compassion, for your welfare will my orisons rise.’

“ Nature pleaded her cause in the breast of the pilot—every exertion was essayed ; they gained upon the vessel—but tyranny softened not : Eusebia could distinguish forms, Eusebia could hear the threats of denunciation, the exclamations of anguish ; in vain she waved her flowing veil, in vain she stood in the boat, and urged to perseverance—

verance—the vessel scudded on. The pilot whispered danger, felt the inefficacy of the attempt, and veered round.

“ Locked in the stupor of despair, my hapless friend found herself reconducted to the shore she had quitted, without money, without support. She landed, unknown, wretched, and bereaved ; but compassion, alive in the philanthropic breast of a stranger, aided her in the hour of exigence. The powers of her mind returned ; she sailed in a ship bound to the port of her original destination. Ah ! how quick throbbed her heart, as fancy pictured bliss, as fancy, on its swiftest pinions, outstripped the winds, and restored her to her bosom’s lord ! Little did she think, poor mourner ! that the green billows which so proudly bore her, washed over the cold deep grave of her love. The night-breeze whistled, the sea-mew shrieked, but anxiety foreboded not the tale. Bright sparkled the sunbeams on the undulating waves, as the vessel rode in the harbour. Eusebia, all trepidation,

all hopeful, anxious joy, eager to realize the ardent anticipations of imagination, sprung into the boat, waiting to convey her to land. In vain she looked among the crowd of assembled spectators—alas! the well-known form of her husband met not her eyes—was never to meet them more!—She heard the denunciation of her fate, she heard the confirmation of her widowhood. Temporary death succeeded: for hours, for days, for weeks, memory sickened with the weight of woe, and she lay, an unconscious, an uncomplaining sufferer.—It was at the soul-harrowing moment, when Eusebia, standing in the boat, waved her white veil, as the last signal for compassion, that, actuated by despair, or perhaps by the desperate design of swimming to her rescue, the ill-fated frenzied partner of her life sprung from the side of the vessel: the flood closed over his head—he sank, to rise no more.”

“ But Eusebia,” said the sympathizing Di Rinaldini.

“ Alas,

"Alas, hapless friend!" resumed Isidore, "heart-riven, she returned to her native province: the world held forth no lures—she forswore it for ever. Though so young and so matchless in beauty, she took the—the—she formed the resolution of living for the memory of her husband, and the duties—and piety beguiled the tediousness of time, and blunted the poignancy of sorrow."

"Unhappy Eusebia!" articulated Huberto.

"Oh, no! not unhappy!" eagerly exclaimed the pilgrim; "for she is in Heaven. A stranger to the mortal influence of revenge, to the jarring passions of the soul, she pardoned the murderer of her peace; she prayed for the tyrant who bereft her life of every comfort, who doomed its close to regret and woe."

"Did she? did she pray for the murderer?" falteringly demanded Di Rinaldini.

"Yes; Heaven knows she did," replied
c 5 Isidore,

Isidore, "even in the last lingering moments of protracted life."

"Then is she a saint indeed!" sighed Huberto, as they passed over the draw-bridge of the Castle.



CHAP. V.

He told him to compose his troubled heart ;

* * * * *

He told him, that religion cur'd despair,

And soften'd every pang that pierc'd the soul.

ALZIRA.

"THE blessed Virgin has sent that beautiful youth to cheer us all," said Varrina, as the introduction and reception of the pilgrim at Montranzo was freely discussed in the servants' hall : "What a mouth ! what teeth ! what a forehead ! and what heavenly eyes !"

"'Tis a virgin's bequest truly," muttered Benevento : "By the mass ! and I doubt not but he's turned your head already !"

"Patience aid us!" retorted Vannina; "can't we admire beauty without being in love? Why, boy, he is younger than yourself!"

"No matter," said the page; "he has a pretty face, and that is enough to catch the heart of a silly woman."

"And a pretty name too," rejoined Vannina—"Isidore!—there's music in the sound: and then he plays on the lute, and sings so sweetly, I vow I would walk a league barefooted, only to hear one of his love-ditties!"

"Doubtless," observed Cyril, "he is some magician in disguise, or some knight-errant in search of adventures, for all the household treat him with respect."

"No wonder," eagerly replied Vannina; "for he is so learned, and so clever!—Why, though he has been here but a month, he reasons and argues with the Signor, about giving way to melancholy, and sighing, and passing his days in moping solitude, just like a philosopher; though, poor
soul!

soul! he looks sad enough himself. I would give my best holiday-suit, nay, and my silver reliquary into the bargain, just to know if he is in love. I caught him this morning pacing the corridor, his arms folded on his breast, and his bright eyes dimmed with tears; and when I asked him the cause of his sorrows, he forced a smile, and told me they were of old date.—‘Tis a pity,’ said I, ‘such a handsome, charming youth, should know sorrow.’

“Did you call him *handsome, charming*?” demanded Benevento.

“Yes, that I did! and he took my hand, and looked so condescending, and so kind! and called me good girl, and pretty Vannina!—I would rather be thought pretty by Isidore, than beautiful by all the world beside.—Heigh-ho! I wonder what can make him unhappy!—But, the Virgin save us! I stand prating here, just as though I had nothing else to do;” and, without deigning to look on the mortified page, she tripped lightly from the hall, and ascending

ascending the staircase, proceeded down the gallery, musing on the new object of her admiration.

Vannina was one of those visionaries in bliss, who picture gratification in every favourite pursuit: she was credulous, romantic, vain. The pilgrim's introduction at the Castle, had opened a field for conjecture; the impenetrable mystery which enveloped him, for speculation; the sentiments of courtesy, for regard: in him she hailed the hero of many a love-fraught tale; in him centred her hopes for the future, and for him did Benevento experience the effects of her caprice.

"Where are you going, Vannina?" demanded Isidore, as, unperceived, he stole upon her reflections.

"Only to the terrace." The sun looks so gay, and so pleasant, that—that—But 'tis stupid to walk alone."

"I, too, am going to the terrace," rejoined

joined Isidore: "'tis a lucky meeting, for I was thinking of you, and wishing for your presence."

"Of me!" repeated the delighted girl.

"Yes," said the pilgrim, with a heavy sigh; "I was thinking that you could acquaint me, why the deep dejection of the Signor di Rinaldini admits not of consolation."

"Is that all?" thought Vannina.

"So virtuous, yet so unhappy!" pursued Isidore—"he looks as though the voice of comfort could not reach him.—Alas! how wretched is the lot of man! born to pain, to sorrow, and calamity: at best, he lingers out but a protracted existence:—even my pious, my generous, my excellent preserver, wears imprinted on his brow, the contracted gloom of melancholy and misfortune. Often have I heard my lamented friend say, on earth there was no surety for felicity: she, lost saint! had lived to prove the validity of her doctrine."

"It is indeed a doctrine not to be controverted,"

troverted," said Vannina: "I remember when, in the solitude of my convent, I sighed only for emancipation; I thought it the most gloomy of prisons, and myself the most wretched of beings: the world was, to me, a fairy vision of bliss; for I judged it through the delusive medium of anticipation. Well, I became one of its members, and instantly its brightest tints faded: its roses I found not divested of thorns; its gaieties pleased, but yielded not the transports I had pictured; nay, my fickle fancy, in moments of disappointment, drew comparisons favourable to the seclusion of Corpus Domini."

The pilgrim started—involuntarily he grasped the arm of Vannina: his eyes bent upon the earth, his colour heightened to the vivid glow of vermillion—"Of Corpus Domini!" he repeated—"know you the convent of Corpus Domini?"

"Yes, and the Lady Abbess, and the holy sisterhood also," rejoined Vannina;

"and

"and the confessional, and the sacristy, and the condemned chamber, and—But why do you tremble?—'Tis a dreadful chamber!" shuddering; "I have heard the nuns talk of a poor unfortunate who was shut up in it: the records of the convent tell of many; but poor sister Philippina's punishment occurred in their own remembrance. 'Tis a sad tale! The offence was love—surely it could not merit death! Nuns grow so cold and so rigid, they forget the force of nature, and make no allowance for the weakness of others.—But you are pale, and your eyes fill with tears: have you, too, heard of sister Philippina?"

"Not all nuns," observed the pilgrim, regardless of the question—"there once lived a member of Corpus Domini, whose heart, whose sentiments, whose purity, and whose Christian charity, contradict the assertion. Oh! had she lived, had Heaven not called her to itself, the trials, the sorrows of my pilgrimage, had——" Trembling,

bling, agitated, he clung to the arm of his astonished companion, and the unfinished accents died upon his lips.

"A member of Corpus Domini!" echoed Vannina—"Holy Virgin! how could you gain admittance into Corpus Domini?"

"I did not say I had," murmured Isidore.

"True; but you knew a member," fixing her eyes inquisitively on his face; "that member could not leave her convent."

The pilgrim continued silent: the pause was long, yet he answered not.

Vannina, who, in vain, sought to decypher the varying expression of his countenance, instigated by curiosity, and panting to dive into the mystery of his concealment, continued—"How then could you know a member of Corpus Domini?"

"I have been at the grate," answered Isidore.

"Ah!

"Ah! but who was it to see?" resumed the inquisitor: "'Tis no trifling motive could take you to the summit of the steep, and almost inaccessible rock, on which the convent stands. Remember, 'twas *love* which plunged poor sister Philippina into that horrid chamber.—Shall I guess the object?"

"I care not," articulated the disconcerted youth.

"Then there is *an object*," archly rejoined Vannina.

The pilgrim raised his eyes to heaven, and sighed.

"It can't be the Lady Abbess," pursued the tormentor, "because her soul is Heaven's, and her heart Father Ignatio's; nor——"

"Father Ignatio is dead," interrupted Isidore.

"Dead!" repeated Vannina, crossing herself; "Father Ignatio dead!—The saints rest him!

him ! in his life he was one of their warmest friends, and mortified the flesh with unabating severity. I remember his once giving me a penitentiary, because I smiled in the midst of a *jubilate*—Poor Father Ignatio !—Well, neither can it be sister Adilda, or sister Ildigirte—the one is too old, and the other too cross ; nor yet sister Emira, for she is an enthusiast ; nor, I am sure, sister Clotilda, for she is almost blind ; nor—ah ! now I have her ! as sure as death, 'tis the pretty little laughing Hemelfride, who used to skip and play among the cloisters, just like a young fawn.”

Again the truant colour flushed the cheeks of the pilgrim, again a pensive cast of thought stole over his features, and swelled his bosom with a heavy sigh.

“ I have often thought it a pity, and a sin,” pursued Vannina, attentively regarding his emotion, “ that so sweet, so lovely, so interesting a girl, should be lost to the world :

world : she was quite a child when I quit-
ted Corpus Domini ; but she bid fair to
deserve a better fate."

The pilgrim paused ; he leant against
the side of the rampart, hid his face in his
hands, and appeared lost in deep reflection.

" The father confessor, the holy supe-
rior, and the nuns, may all preach forbear-
ance," continued Vannina ; " but, in spite
of all their homilies, I am sure it was never
the will of God to shut up young maidens
in such a place ; no, no ; he is more the
friend of mankind, than to command such
restrictions. Don't you think so, Isidore ?"

The pilgrim started : " I—I—I think—"
Trembling, confused, he remained silent
for a few moments, and then concluded—
" Religion enjoins it."

" No, 'tis religion's bigots," warmly re-
joined Vannina.

" Fie ! fie !" exclaimed Isidore ; " must
I conclude you an apostate to the faith ?"

" No,"

"No," archly smiling, "only conclude me an apostate to confinement.—But the pretty Hemelfride—have I guessed right? Come, make me your confidante: do you not love her?"

"*Love her!—Holy Virgin! love Hemelfride!—Yes, as myself.*"

"And does she love you?"

"Ever has she taught me to believe so."

"Then you confess to know her? you confess to have seen her?"

"I hope I know her," replied Isidore; "I have often seen her."

"You have often seen her!" repeated Vannina: "then 'tis Hemelfride who leads you to the grate?"

"When I have visited the grate, 'tis true, Hemelfride has been my companion."

"Happy Hemelfride!" murmured the disconcerted Vannina.

"Ah! how rash is your conclusion!" eagerly exclaimed the pilgrim—"Alas! Hemelfride knows not happiness!"

"Because she is absent from you," replied

plied Vannina : " but she possesses your heart, she occupies your every thought, she fills your every sigh, she lives eternally in your memory ; how then can she be unhappy ? "

" Because——" but fearfully checking himself—" my thoughts, my heart, my sighs, constitute not the happiness of Hemelfride."

" Then is your love slighted," said Vannina—" Poor youth ! in spite of her coldness, in spite of pride's strong struggles, still does it centre in the convent of Corpus Domini ! "

" No," shuddering ; " the gloomy walls of Corpus Domini enshrine not my love."

" Strange and enigmatical being !" said Vannina, " to confess and contradict in the same breath ! "

" Pardon me," exclaimed Isidore : " Hemelfride loves me, as I love Hemelfride ; but Hemelfride constitutes not my happiness, neither do I constitute the happiness of Hemelfride."

The

The countenance of Vannina brightened; a weight seemed to remove from her bosom, as, with an exulting smile, she said—
“Then you are not lovers!”

“Lovers!” repeated the pilgrim, his pure mind, like the modest sensitive, shrinking at the supposition, “oh, no!—When I was born, then did Hemelfride come into being; Hemelfride, *the novice of Corpus Domini*, is as myself, is——”

“Your sister?” eagerly demanded Vannina.

“My sister,” concluded Isidore, and again hid his burning cheek in his hand.

“’Tis strange!” observed Vannina—
“The nuns used to say, though ’twas ever a forbidden subject, that a dark mystery hung over the birth of their little favourite; nay, I have heard it hinted——” but a convulsive sob checked the current of discourse.

Vannina snatched the hand of the pilgrim, and beheld his features bathed in
tears:

tears: curiosity yielded to compassion; sedulously she strove to sooth him; and, as she led him to the extremity of the terrace, talked of her own removal from the convent, and the scenes she had witnessed during her residence at Montranzo. Insensibly the interest of her companion became excited; he listened to the praises of Huberto, with unbreathing attention—his own sorrows seemed to yield to the sufferings of his preserver; and, not till Vannina spoke of the clandestine union of the lovers, did he, for a moment, interrupt the recital.

“Then the Signor was married?” said Isidore.

“Ah! surely was he,” replied Vannina; “and, by St. Benedict! married to the sweetest, best, loveliest lady, in the province of Umbria—in all the Ducato Spoleitano; nay, for the matter of that, I query whether the equal of the Signora Adelheida Alverani could have been produced

duced in all the holy prince of the apostles' domains : and withal she was so pious, and so charitable, and so good ! Many and oft's the time, when I and the Signor Huberto have stood, unknown witnesses of her devotion ; have seen her fine dark eyes, just like yours, Isidore, raised to Heaven, and heard her repeat the rosary of the blessed Virgin, and the *angelus Domini*, and— But, mercy save us ! what is the matter ? How you tremble !”

“ Nothing, nothing !” faltered the pilgrim—“ Proceed, Vannina—Her eyes—what of her eyes ?”

“ Her eyes,” she resumed, “ were the prettiest I ever beheld, until you came to the Castle ; but they could not save her, blessed soul ! no, nor all her beauty. One would think it was a great crime to love ; for, Heaven knows, the love of the Signor and the Lady Adelheida was followed by misery. Do *you* think it a crime to love ?”

“ I hope not,” ejaculated Isidore, mournfully

fully averting his eyes from the scrutinizing glance of Vannina—"But was your young mistress so very handsome?"

"I will shew her to you," replied Vannina, "and then you may judge: to-night, after the Signor has retired to rest, if you will go with me to the north gallery, we will visit her picture: and yet," fearfully, "we must pass the oratory; and that oratory!" devoutly crossing herself—"Mother of God! that oratory!—Sweet saint! she used to pray there: but now——" and Vannina, pausing, looked timidly around.

"What of the oratory, and whence this apprehension?" demanded the pilgrim.

"Alas!" replied Vannina, "my lady rests not in peace!—When she died—oh! 'twas a woful sight to see her!—Santa Maria! I had just dropped asleep, when I heard such dreadful shrieks! Her death was so sudden, her sufferings so great—I liked not the appearance——" and again he paused.

"Superstition is a poisonous weed," ob-

served Isidore, "which, engendered in the mind, cramps its energies, and subverts all its powers."

"'Tis not superstition," rejoined the agitated girl, "for the Signor himself has heard it. 'Tis true, the sounds were sweet, were seraphic; just such as Father Ignatio used to describe the music of the spheres. Heaven help me! little then did I ever expect to hear them."

"And yet you were terrified."

"Terrified! — Holy St. Benedict! I thought I should have died under such accumulated horrors!" and then the loquacious Vannina acquainted the pilgrim with the death of the Lady Adelheida, the disappearance of the Conte, the mysterious circumstances which succeeded, nay, even with her own suspicions.

Musing on what he had heard, Isidore returned to the Castle; and, while Vannina sought the servants' hall, ascended the stairs to visit the oratory, and examine the supposed

posed haunt of the departed Adelheida. With arms folded, eyes bent on the earth, and every thought absorbed in the known sorrows of his preserver, he passed rapidly on: "Merciful God!" burst from his trembling lips, "so virtuous, yet so miserable!—Oh, Di Rinaldini! most excellent, most perfect of beings! would I could give thee comfort!"

"Isidore," softly articulated a voice.

The sound thrilled to his heart; he looked up, and beheld Huberto; a blush of timid joy stole over his features.

"Isidore," again said Di Rinaldini, "if comfort reaches me on earth, it will be through your friendship."

Again the vagrant crimson fled the cheek of the pilgrim; he trembled, his eyes swam in tears, and a languid, half-breathed sigh, found utterance.

"Poor boy!" pursued Huberto, "how strong must be the sympathetic feelings of your soul, when the sorrows of a stranger awaken such compassion!"

"Say not a stranger," faltered Isidore; "gratitude stamps my preserver with the sacred name of friend."

"Henceforth, and for ever, be it *friend*," solemnly pronounced Di Rinaldini: "yet, ere we seal the compact, promise me the selfish wish of my heart—promise me to remain at Montranzo."

The pilgrim paused for a moment, yet he grasped the extended hand of Huberto: suddenly he sank upon his knee, suddenly he raised his eyes to heaven—"Great and omnipotent Being, who readest the hidden motives of my every action," he ejaculated, "direct the secret springs of my heart!"

The exclamation of amazement which burst from the lips of his observer, recalled him

him to himself: he arose, confused, agitated, and faintly articulated—"While my presence can give you peace, command it."

"Then rest for ever here," said Di Rinaldini—"be this your home; for, though peace never again become the sweet inmate of my bosom, yet shall I bless Heaven for the companion, the friend, it has bestowed."

"Peace may yet shine, happiness may yet gild the future," observed Isidore.

"Happiness!" repeated Huberto, in accents of hurried sadness—"no; never; never!"

"Yes," pursued the pilgrim, with a smile of the most resistless sweetness, "time will ameliorate affliction; virtues such as yours must command it."

Di Rinaldini shook his head.

"We all imagine the iron rod of calamity must crush us," continued Isidore; "yet the hand of Providence supports us
H 4 through

through afflictions, and enables us to baffle the trials destiny inflicts."

"Speak you from experience? are you a casuist in misfortune? or do you sport the hacknied precepts of others?"

"I have felt sorrow," sighed the youth.

"But you have never lost the partner of your heart."

"Sorrow assails in various shapes."

"True; but the heart."

"The heart is indeed most vulnerable."

"Then you too have loved?" abruptly rejoined Huberto.

"Loved!" falteringly repeated Isidore, his cheek fading to the hue of death.

"You echo, you prevaricate. Mysterious boy! from what other source can spring the palpable emotions I beheld? emotions," fixing his eyes upon the face of the pilgrim, with a penetrating earnestness which again flushed it to the deep tint of scarlet, "which, like a tide, dapples your youthful cheek, and whispers your nature inimical to disguise. Say, have I not penetrated the
the

the veil of concealment?—exists there not a being dear to your soul, as is to mine the memory of Adelheida?"

Again the flushed cheek of the youth faded to the lily's whiteness; thrice he attempted to speak, but thrice the tremulous agitation of his frame forbad the effort: "Ah, no!" at length he faltered; "the being I most loved upon earth exists no longer."

"But the memory of that love survives the die of fate," rejoined Di Rinaldini, "mocks even the power of the grave, by reviving the short, the fleeting hours of transport."

"Does it exclude every other hope?" demanded the pilgrim; "does it, like an unwholesome blast, mildew life's future promises?"

"Alas! too sure it does!" sighed Huberto.

"Does it, and for ever does it exclude hope?" eagerly questioned Isidore, his

eyes, beaming more than usual radiance, raised to the pensive features of his friend.

"Let your heart resolve that question."

"Then my heart," pursued the youth, "speaks the precepts of its instructor's; my heart whispers, virtue must rise superior to the weakness of calamity."

"*Must* forget the idol of its worship!" reproachfully uttered Di Rinaldini.

"*Must* soften to composure the memory of that idol," resumed the youth; "*must* yield to the mandate of Heaven, by following the dictates of reason and of nature."

"If nature teaches ingratitude, where lies the merit of observance?" demanded Huberto.

"In the performance of our duty," replied Isidore; "in the minutest instance of submission to the Supreme. Alas! the gratitude you would insinuate, the gratitude excited by the remembrance of the perfections of a departed object, surely teaches ingratitude to God; or why, for one

one lost blessing, slight a thousand? why waste a life which might be beneficial to mankind, in useless unavailing melancholy? why, from the social haunts of society, fly to the misanthropic gloom of retirement? why squander youth, health, affluence, in vague regrets, in irreligious murmurs?"

"Because my spirits sicken at the sound of joy," said Di Rinaldini; "and my tortured heart seeks no harbour beyond these mountain wilds, to vent its sorrows. On the grave of my love, at the still, cold hour of night, I can pour forth my lamentations, and catch from responsive echo the sympathetic sigh."

"Feeling unallied to fortitude, is weakness," mildly observed the pilgrim: "the hand which dealt the blow, demands not such deprivations. The healing balm of mercy, descending, through the genial rays of religion, upon this sublunary world, blesses domestic peace, smiles on social intercourse and innocent indulgence."

"The Camaldoli brothers hold forth a
a 6. different

different doctrine," said Huberto: "they picture virtue in flying from temptation, they picture religion as pointing to dereliction and gloomy solitude."

"Mistaken hypothesis!" warmly rejoined Isidore—"Religion! oh, no!—'tis bigotry, 'tis fanaticism!—The pure spirit of Christianity enjoins not the bleeding sacrifice of life's sweet hopes, leads not to the altar the reluctant victim, nor immolates the tender feelings of the heart. Oh, Nature! Nature!" with an enthusiasm which glowed in every feature, "surely thy warm attributes, stamped, as it were, by the finger of the Creator, cannot be unacceptable in the created!"

Di Rinaldini stedfastly eyed the speaker, as, pointing to his palmer's weeds, he exclaimed—"How little does your doctrine and your habit accord!"

A faint smile played around the rosy lips of the youth, as tremulously he articulated,

culated, "My habit is the habit of necessity; my doctrine, the result of experience."

"Of experience!" repeated Huberto.

"Alas, yes! for I have heard of the analization of the heart in the moment of trial, in the moment when, surrounded by the dreary appendages of death, the ministers of Heaven have pressed the fatal, fatal vow of seclusion; that vow, which stamps every feeling of nature criminal, which prescribes the wishes of the soul, which turns the blessing life into lingering inaction, and isolated misery. Sainted Mary! that vow——" and the palsied start which accompanied the exclamation, seemed to recal him to himself; for, looking timidly on the ground, he concluded—"At the grate of the convent of Corpus Domini, what have I not seen! what have I not deplored!"

"And is experience gleaned by a casual observance in the visit of a moment?" asked Di Rinaldini; "is the sigh of devotion to be magnified into discontent, and
the

the solemn step of piety into the lingering reluctance of compulsion? No, Isidore; the soul, occupied by secular pursuits, often draws conclusions which the pure spirit of religion must condemn."

"Alas, Signor! mine are not the rash conclusions of a casual observance; mine are founded on the known sufferings of a being, doomed the sport of fate, doomed the victim of fanatic power, doomed the death-fraught life of a Corpus Domini sister."

"Doomed!" repeated Huberto; "and is there no hand to save her? no hand to avert the dreadful coercion?—Poor sufferer! at the grate of Corpus Domini you have heard her sighs—you have breathed compassion, tenderness, love; and thus, perhaps, have aggravated the dire sacrifice of liberty."

"Not love," murmured Isidore: "at the grate of Corpus Domini I knew not its influence; neither did the mind of the youthful novice require its aid to firm her purpose:

purpose : no ; she was fixed past the reach of persuasion, past the threat of punishment."

" And did she to the ear of a stranger commit her decision ?" questioned Di Rinaldini.

" No, not to a stranger ; to her earliest companion, her first-remembered friend—Hemelfride is the only being in life to whom I can claim kindred."

" Poor youth ! and must that tender-tie be severed ?—Is she yet professed ? is she yet lost beyond the power of redemption ?"

" Oh, no ! she lives, and for the world ! Heaven has smiled upon her efforts, Heaven has sanctioned her resolves ; she lives, free from that tyrant power which would have chained her down to regret and woe."

" 'Twas you then who aided her flight," said Huberto, " 'twas you who conducted her to safety. Ah ! surely gratitude will fan the flame of prepossession in her heart ; and the liberty you have preserved will be offered

offered up, an hostage for your future happiness."

"No, Signor," breathing a heavy sigh, "the liberty I have preserved cannot ensure my happiness."

"But the place of her retreat?" again questioned Di Rinakdini.

"Pardon me," replied Isidore; "there must I remain silent."

"Her age then, my young recusant?"

"Alas! how can we disclose, when our vow is secrecy?"

"True," exclaimed Huberto, clasping his hands in agonizing remembrance; "a vow is, *ought* to be, sacred.—But the age of this fugitive Hemelfride," regaining his self-command—"is she very young?"

"Her age, to a day, to an hour, is my own—she is my twin-sister."

"And her person?"

"My exact image," replied the pilgrim, drawing over his blushing face the hood of his habit—"the same height, the same features."

"Then

"Then Hemelfride must be beautiful," observed Di Rinaldini, "because——"

"Because why?" eagerly questioned Isidore.

"Because—but no matter. Till now, I knew not you had a sister: wherefore this concealment? Do you judge me unworthy of your confidence? or is reserve your native characteristic?"

"Neither," faltered the youth, as an air of pensive sadness pervaded his features: "yet, even now, circumstances alone have called forth a disclosure, which, but for your enquiries, would have been withheld. Unworthy!—Blessed Mary! the preserver of my life unworthy of my confidence!—Oh that I could open my heart to your inspection! that I could reveal its inmost, its most secret folds!—Alas! I cannot, I dare not: I feel—I know it would bear investigation; but yet——" and pausing, he threw a look of wild suspense to heaven, clasped his hands, and sighed—"Yet bear with me," with restored firmness; "judge

" judge not from appearances—my soul disclaims the seeming mystery of my actions; but necessity conquers will."

The heart of Huberto smote him for the reproach his words had conveyed; and the tear he saw swimming in the dark eye of Isidore, recalled all the genial kindness of his nature: " Pardon, my young friend," he implored, " the wayward expression of disappointed curiosity; and, when I confess the reproach unworthy my esteem and your conduct, attribute it rather to momentary heat than intentional asperity."

The pilgrim smiled his acceptance of the apology; and, wishing to do away the imputation of reserve, added, " My sister, like myself, is a visionary; romantic, sanguine, she is scarcely eighteen, a victim to the feelings of the heart, and a slave to the force of sentiment."

" How could the feelings of the heart, how could the force of sentiment, gain admittance

mittance within the hallowed walls of conventional seclusion?" demanded Di Rinaldini.

"In every situation," sighed Isidore, "Nature claims her prerogative: Hemelfride learnt from kindness, the strength of friendship; she guessed from the heart's vacuum, the energy of love."

"Sweet maid!" murmured Huberto, "what did not thy tender sensitive heart endure, in the threatened wreck of all its promised bliss, its rapturous anticipations?"

"Oh! she felt," eagerly resumed the youth, "all the mingled struggles of terror, agony, distraction: driven to the acme of despair, for nights her eyes closed not in rest. Her spirit subdued, her pride broken, even on her knees she deigned to supplicate mercy—but it was denied; the absolute power of her persecutors left nothing to hope, a respite of her fate was unsanctioned."

"Fiends! barbarous, relentless fiends!" exclaimed Di Rinaldini.

"All

"All this was for the love of God," pursued Isidore, "all this was the pure workings of immaculate faith: a soul unstained by sin was a rich sacrifice, which religion sanctioned, which bigotry offered up, a bribe to mercy."

"But your sister?" demanded Huberto; "'tis for your sister I feel interested. The coercion of monachal power, the erudite arguments of sectaries, the abstruse documents of science, must be the subject of future disquisition; 'tis Hemelfride alone claims my thoughts, 'tis of Hemelfride alone I would wish to hear."

"Hemelfride beheld every hope of her enlargement expire," resumed the pilgrim: "in vain she protested her vows were reluctant, were compulsatory; in vain her refractory spirit spurned the zealous ardour of her superior's persuasions; her arguments were nominated heretical, her reproaches profanation, and her perseverance obstinacy. The day, the hour, was fixed for her sacrifice, was fixed for her
renunciation

renunciation of a world she had so often panted to behold."

"And did it dawn on her within her prison walls?" interrogated Dī Rinaldini; "or did the arduous enterprise precede—"

"What enterprise?" interrupted Isidore.

Fearing to repeat the question, lest again curiosity should wound the feelings of his guest, with a faint smile he concluded, as he led him from the corridor—"You have said Hemelfride is in safety, you have said Hemelfride is not professed."

CHAP. VI.

For something still there lies
In Heav'n's dark volume, which I read through mists,

DRYDEN.

.....

Why is my pity all that I can give
To woe like hers ?

ROWE.

ISIDORE, pacing his chamber, patiently awaited the signal of Vannina. The night was dark and cold; the wind howled around the turret, and agitated the curling waves of the Metremo, which lashed the walls beneath: no star glittered in the darkened canopy of heaven; the moon, shrouded by clouds, lent not her rays, and the tall heads of the mountain-cypress waved in melancholy

choly cadence. Silent and sad, he folded his arms upon his bosom, as he mused upon the wrecked prospects of Di Rinaldini's hopes: the tale which Vannina had disclosed, the dark hints which her suspicions had suggested, but, above all, the mysterious sounds, which she affirmed nought but supernatural agency to have produced, awakened wonder, and excited sympathy: "Alas!" sighed the pilgrim, "how slender is the tenure of mundane felicity!—Adelheida, so loved, so fair, so excellent; Adelheida, so tenderly attached, so nobly disinterested; the once-worshipped wife of Di Rinaldini, the once-mighty heiress of Montranzo, now slumbers in the gold mausoleum of her ancestors, now fills with terror and dismay the coward hearts of her domestics!—Lost saint! injured and unfortunate being! not all thy mild virtues, not all thy known benevolence, not all thy Christian meekness, can check the weak coinage of superstition: ignorance and credulity swell the offspring of surmise; and,

and, because thy death was sudden, thy agony excruciating, even Vannina, thy humble and attached friend, instigated by fear, forgets that, in mercy alone, thy shade would descend; that thou wouldst comfort, not appal."

A gentle tap at the door, the signal for the intended visit to the gallery, dissipated his reflections. Vannina entered the apartment, and, placing her lamp upon the table, exclaimed—"If we wait but a few moments longer, the household will have sunk to rest. I fear our design is known, for Benevento watched me, with a scrutiny which betrays suspicion."

"Why is such secrecy necessary?" demanded Isidore—"Surely it is no crime to view the picture of the Lady Adelheida; wherefore, then, do our actions seem to dread detection?"

"Your actions need not fear detection," said Vannina, "but mine: 'tis so different, Isidore. Were I to be seen—at so late an hour

hour too—'tis past midnight!—and the world——”

“The world!” repeated the youth—
“what can the world have to do with our visit to the northern gallery?”

“Nothing,” rejoined Vannina; “but the world will judge from appearance.”

“Appearance!” again interrupted the astonished Isidore.

“You are young, and I am young,” hesitated the blushing Vannina; “and the world seeks not for motives.”

“Ah! now I understand you!” exclaimed the pilgrim; “you fear lest your kindness to me should occasion misrepresentation—lest Benevento——”

“No, you mistake: indeed, Isidore, I care not for Benevento.”

“Then what do you fear?”

“I fear,” faltered Vannina—“I scarce know what I fear; and yet,” anxious to change the topic of discourse, “I tremble to think of the long dreary passages through

which we have to pass. Jesu Maria ! 'tis nearly on the stroke of one, and that is the hour when the spectre of my lost mistress visits the corridor."

"Did you ever injure her?" questioned the youth.

"Injure her, sweet soul ! no, never !— In life I loved her, in death I lament her."

"In death you fear her," observed the pilgrim.

"Nay, I only fear to see her," said Vannina, "because——"

"You have yielded to superstition," concluded Isidore, "until, like a rank weed, it has choked the springs of reason, subverted piety, and poisoned sense."

"Oh, no ! piety sanctions credulity, or why would Father Brazilio exhort us to believe?"

"Father Brazilio tells you to believe in the mercy of Heaven," rejoined the youth, "not in the wild phantasies of your own distempered brain."

" 'Tis

"'Tis well," exclaimed the half-offended Vannina ; " though a little more faith, and a little less presumption, would be better."

The pilgrim smiled.

" Perhaps, were you even to hear the organ, you would affirm the sounds earthly. Well, the blessed Virgin forgive you !—but I have known conviction brought home to as stout, a heart."

" When the hour comes," observed Isidore, " the hand of Providence will support me under the trial 'tis his infinite wisdom to inflict."

" Grant, Heaven, this be not the hour !" aspirated Vannina, as piously she crossed her bosom.

" If your coward heart misgives you, relinquish at once the design," said the pilgrim—" Religion teaches me to believe the power of God supreme, to rely implicitly on his mercy ; and in the darkness of

night, as in the noonday beam, to own, to supplicate, to trust his protection."

"Would I could feel as you do!—I too believe, I too trust in his protection; but yet, in the dark, my knees seem to fail me—in the dark, I can think of nothing but danger. In the morning we cannot go," pausing, "for fear of meeting the Signor."

"Does the Signor Di Rinaldini often visit the picture of the Lady Adelheida?" demanded Isidore.

"Yes; very, very often," replied Vannina; "and gazes on it, till every sorrow is renewed.—Perhaps," musing, "to-morrow night the wind may not sigh so melancholy; methinks," glancing timidly round the chamber, "the very turret seems to rock. Holy St. Maxima! if a blast was to extinguish the lamp in crossing the black marble hall, I should expire with terror!"

"If it is only the wind you fear, Vannina, let us away."

"The

"The wind," murmured the reluctant girl, "is dismal, but it cannot harm us; 'tis the—the——"

"What! still the slave of superstition?" said Isidore—"Remain behind then, and I alone will seek the gallery."

"But, when there, how can you ascertain the picture of the Signora? You will see many, and the Marchesa di Montranzo's is not less handsome."

"I will guess it," answered the pilgrim.

"Come, I will be your pilot," exclaimed Vannina, snatching the lamp with a momentary renewal of courage.

Isidore took it from her hand, and opened the door of the chamber. Quickly descending the spiral stairs of the turret, they passed down the stone passage which immediately communicated with the Castle, and entering the east hall, crossed into a kind of vestibule, which formed the entrance of one of its extensive wings.

"We must turn to the left," whispered Vannina; "for yon passage," pointing to a strongly-barricaded door, "terminates in a staircase, which, for the universe, I would not descend."

"Why not?" demanded Isidore.

"Because," rejoined Vannina, almost forgetting her terror in the pleasure of communication, "that staircase opens into a large gloomy vault, forming the entrance of a subterranean, which extends to the cemetery of the Camaldoli convent; and that vault, Ludovico, the warder, affirms to be the rendezvous of all the long-buried dead of St. Romuald's brotherhood. One night, as he was crossing this very passage, he heard a strange noise, creaking like the hinges of a door; and, a moment after, a monk, in the cowl and scapular of the Camaldoli order, glided past him, and, almost as quick as thought, disappeared through that iron gate. Now Ludovico, who is as bold as a lion, must needs follow
the

the spectre ; but all his strength could not move the door, which, but a moment before, had opened, as it were of itself, to admit the monk : he knocked, and hammered, and moved the bolts, but still it resisted. Even then, his courage did not fail him ; nay, he vows he persevered, in spite of a horrid sepulchral noise, which, from the interior, seemed to warn him to desist. He had placed his lamp on the ground, and buttoned back the sleeves of his tunic, when a hollow, deep-toned voice, exclaimed—‘ Begone ! the punishment of presumption is death ! ’—He felt as though seized by an ague, and, without waiting a second bidding, flew to the servants’ hall. Never shall I forget how pale——”

“ Are you sure the appearance wore the habit of a Camaldoli father ? ” interrupted Isidore.

“ So Ludovico affirms,” replied Vannina ; “ but he saw not its face, for that was muffled in the cowl.”

"And that passage," pursued the pilgrim, "leads to the cemetery of St. Romuald?"

"It does."

"I should like to trace it," pausing; "perhaps——"

"Holy St. Mary! trace it!" repeated Vannina, shuddering; "not for the pope-dom, would I see you enter that horrid gate!—But let us away; do, Isidore," grasping his arm, "do let us away! If we talk so much of Ludovico, we shall never reach the gallery."

The pilgrim walked silently by her side. The story Vannina had recited, though trivial in itself, had opened a field for conjecture: his firm mind, ever combatting the weakness of superstition, now clung to the possibility of treachery, and rejected every impulse of fear: "What if this monk, this nocturnal disturber of Montranzo's quiet, should prove a mortal, not an immortal agent!" he ejaculated.

Vannina

Vannina started—"Oh, impious suggestion!" she murmured.

"Why impious?" asked Isidore: "I would fain possess the spirit of true religion, not the mistaken essence of pusillanimity and fanatic frenzy; I would—I do, with my whole soul, ascribe every good to divine interposition; but I cannot yield to that superstition you nominate faith; no! the monk Ludovico saw pass through the gate which leads to the subterranean, I dare affirm to be no ghostly visitor; nay, the very sounds in the oratory——"

"Hold! in mercy, hold!" implored the trembling Vannina, as, with a palsied start, she pointed to a low arch at the summit of the marble flight of steps they were ascending—"As the light shot faintly upon yon pillar," she continued, "I saw a shadow swiftly pass. Ah! there again!—Holy Virgin! who knows but the sacrilegious words you have now uttered are registered——"

"*Registered!*" was distinctly repeated;

and all, save the moaning of the mountain-blast, became hushed.

Vannina, pale, horror-struck, clung to the pilgrim: long in vain did he seek to reassure her—"It was but the echo of your own voice," he said; "examine the arched ceiling of the passage, and be convinced."

"An echo!" repeated the terrified girl; "and the shadow?"

"Believe me, the offspring of your own fancy," replied Isidore.

"No, no; I saw the shroud which mantled it!—Let us return; I dare not enter the black marble hall."

"What!" said the pilgrim, "return, and pass the gate through which the monk glided!"

"Make haste then," articulated Vannina, sobbing, "or I shall die."

"Nay, you are the pilot," with forced gaiety rejoined the youth—"desert not your post, my pretty Vannina; march on, and conquer danger."

Vannina

Vannina smiled, but it was momentary ; the gloomy aspect of the hall which they had now entered, and the deathlike chill it produced, checked the effort. With a heavy heart she paused, as Isidore, extending high the lamp, sought to examine its formation. It was of an octagonal form, but too large to admit the slightest ray penetrating its extremities ; a thick range of black marble pillars, forming a kind of piazza, and supporting a narrow mirador, completely encircled it ; while, from the mosaic roof, hung the tattered remnants of many a mouldering banner. Heavy sounded their feet upon its tessellated pavement ; and ever and anon Vannina started, as the lamp's reflecting rays chequered a thousand shadows which terror animated.—“ Do you not fear ? ” she softly whispered ; and she clung still tighter to the arm of her companion, as they entered a narrow passage immediately leading to the northern gallery.

“ Fear ! ” repeated Isidore, breathing an

ave Maria, and numbering the beads of his rosary ; “ fear ! no, Vannina ; Heaven forsakes not the innocent : in my heart I feel a confidence the machinations of man cannot subdue.”

As he spoke, a shadow again momentarily darkened the path, and Vannina hid her face in her hands.

“ Come on ! ” exclaimed the pilgrim, leading her forward ; and, ere she ventured to look around, they had reached the gallery. It was long and lofty, lighted by a range of painted-glass windows, whose huge frames, and distance from the ground, forbade the noonday sun to find an entrance. In gilded frames, the vivid colours of immortal genius caught the wandering eye—fiction and history alternately furnished the artist’s design ; in the same line might be seen the dying heroism of a Lucretia, and love yielding to courage, in the parting of Hector and Andromaché ; the rape of the Sabines,

Sabines, and Paris adjudging the prize of beauty: here a Madona softened to tender melancholy, there a Bacchante delineated the exuberance of pleasure.—Isidore slightly glanced over these efforts of Italian genius: he was an enthusiast in the fine arts, but his mind was alone occupied in the object of his search.

“That is the portrait of the Lady Adelheida,” said Vannina, directing his attention to the glowing representations of a being enriched with all the charms of youth, health, happiness, and beauty.

“Ah! what a heavenly countenance!” articulated the pilgrim—“such expression, yet such sweetness! it looks more like the bright vision of the painter’s brain, than the semblance of what once was mortal. Ill-fated Di Rinaldini! never upon earth canst thou meet the equal of such perfection!”

“And she was as good as she looks,” exclaimed Vannina, eager to panegyrize the virtues

virtues of her benefactress—"so mild, so gentle, so patient; and, withal, so attached to the Signor Huberto, that he can never forget her tenderness.—But, Mother of God! what have you seen? what is the matter?" for pale, trembling, agitated, the youth supported himself against the opposite wall. Regardless of the terror of Vannina, for many moments his eyes continued rivetted on the picture, and his whole thoughts appeared absorbed in the scrutiny.

"Do, for the love of Heaven, speak!" sobbed Vannina: "if you are ill, Isidore, what will become of me? my voice cannot reach the inhabited chambers, and to return alone I dare not."

"Fear not," murmured the youth, forcing a smile, as he extended his hand; "I am quite well, quite recovered—'twas but a little faintness: now I am ready to return with you," and again he glanced at the picture,

Without

Without encountering the shadowy witness of their nocturnal ramble, without hearing the slightest sound to arouse terror or conjecture, they retraced their steps through the grand, but desolated, apartments of the Castle; and as the clock in the great hall struck two, Isidore, at the foot of the turret staircase, pressing the hand of Vannina, bid her good-night, and retired to the solitude of his chamber.

It was long ere he sank to rest: left to the guidance of his own reflections, the grey-eyed dawn of morning peeped from the misty east, and shed her saffron hue over nature's stillness, ere, for a moment, he forgot to watch; and, even then, vague and shapeless ideas floated in his brain, and poisoned the calm oblivion of repose. The monk who, in the darkness of the subterranean pass to St. Romuald, sought shelter from the obtrusive eye of Ludovico, divested of his cloak of religious hypocrisy, in the demoniac fury of revenge was pursuing

suing Huberto. In vain the pilgrim strove to divert his malice, or turn away the deadly shaft of his hatred—to the very verge of life he had driven him; and when the gulf of fate seemed to open, when love, and hope, and life, seemed to expire, nature surmounted the struggle, by snapping the shackles of slumber.

Pale, trembling, unrefreshed, Isidore arose; his pillow was still wet with the tears he had shed, and his heart still throbbed with the quickened pulsation of anguish. Fearing to excite enquiries he felt unwilling to solve, from his chamber he repaired to the ramparts: melancholy yielded to admiration, dejection to hope, in the rich scenes of brilliant splendour, which broke upon his view: the Metremo glided beneath the bright sunshine of a serene atmosphere, and the balmy breeze, rich with the impregnated sweets of a thousand blossoms, sighed through thick groves of white-thorned acacia, and flowering myrtle.—

myrtle.—“To be lost,” thought the pilgrim, “to sink, the slave of inaction and repining discontent, when nature smiles on to happiness! Amid scenes like these, to shun the voice of consolation, and court the corrosive gloom of despair!—Ah! surely,” with an energy all his own, “surely man pays with ingratitude the bounty of Heaven; man slights the rich bequest of mercy, and stamps with the die of misery his future fate!”

Isidore, descending to the hall, found Di Rinaldini just returned from St. Romuald, where he had been to visit his friend the canon. For some moments he appeared not to notice the entrance of the youth, but stood at a window, apparently lost in contemplation: suddenly turning—“Is your sister in a place of safety?” he abruptly demanded.

The pilgrim started—“Safety!” he repeated; “Heaven grant it!—But wherefore this enquiry?”

“From

"From the pure motive of compassion," replied Huberto—"The flight of a *novice of Corpus Domini* is circulated, and the vengeance of its superior is denounced."

The pilgrim folded his arms upon his bosom, as his livid lips murmured, "Unhappy Hemelfride!"

"Ah! too sure is she unhappy," resumed Di Rinaldini, "unless screened from recognition!—Sweet victim of unjust coercion! would I could save thee! would I could offer myself a ransom for thy safety!"

"Yourself!—Merciful Heaven! has then the fate of Hemelfride excited an interest in your bosom?"

"Hemelfride is your sister," said Huberto.

"True," rejoined the youth; "and, through her brother, is indebted for this compassion."

"'Tis more than compassion, Isidore," exclaimed Di Rinaldini—"the term is too cold for the warm feelings of my heart. Until I beheld you, I had no pursuit, no hope,

Hope, no comfort; directed by the hand of Providence, you came, and awakened gladness: you saw me fallen in the depth of despondency, and your society cheered me; you saw me yielding to despair, and your arguments brought conviction—the pathos of your voice breathed resistless magic: pity so soft, so sweet, so new, conveyed the heart-directed balm of sympathy, and aroused every feeling of exertion.”

A smile of joy almost celestial playing around the lips, irradiated the features of the pilgrim with the rosy tints of animation; while the broken sentence, the spontaneous tear, the half-heaved sigh, proclaimed his agitation.

“It is to you I am indebted for the remnant of peace I enjoy,” pursued Di Rinaldini; “it is to you I am indebted for the future hopes I picture: yes, interesting, amiable Isidore, your society alone, on this
this

this side Heaven, is my anchor of reliance; and your society you have generously tendered. Ah, then, does not gratitude urge more than compassion to the sister of such a friend? Yes; it demands more than common exertion, more than a common sacrifice, and readily will I make it: I would save Hemelfride, I would offer the forlorn one an asylum, I would defend her against her enemies, I would support her against the machinations of power. Isidore, there is but one way to ensure her safety: 'tis true, the bleeding wounds of my bosom are not yet healed; 'tis true, memory still rankles over departed joys; 'tis true, my heart, my soul, is Adelheida's—but my hand is unshackled: as the husband of Hemelfride, my prerogative will supersede the prerogative of Corpus Domini, and our vows will not be exchanged in vain.—Wherefore do I see you thus agitated? Lead me to the asylum your sister has chosen, lead me to the lovely Hemelfride; recite to her the tale of my sufferings, re-
cite

cite to her the torture my heart has endured ; and if then she will marry the bankrupt——”

“ Marry !” interrupted the almost-breathless Isidore—“ Hemelfride !—Holy Heaven ! Hemelfride !—You, you marry Hemelfride !—But no,” checking himself, while his features assumed a pride foreign to their native expression ; “ ’tis to affection, not to compassion, Hemelfride must be indebted for the hand of her husband.”

“ My aim was not to wound the delicate feelings of a brother,” rejoined Huberto ; “ no, Isidore ; self-interest was even stronger than compassion, in the plan proposed. Hemelfride, the image of yourself ; Hemelfride, an assemblage of unrivalled charms, with a disposition, a heart, a mind, as faultless as her person——”

“ Ah, no !” warmly interrupted the blushing youth, “ Hemelfride is not faultless ! Guided by nature’s impulse, often does she forget reserve, does she disregard prudence ;

dence; often is she betrayed into errors her cooler judgment must condemn."

"You interrupt," said Di Rinaldini—"Self-interest instigates; that, in ensuring the hand of a tenderly-loved sister, I shall possess an additional claim upon the affection of her brother; self-interest whispers, that when Huberto becomes the lawful protector of Hemelfride, Montranzo will become the acknowledged home of Isidore."

"When Hemelfride is your wife," exclaimed the pilgrim, yielding for a moment to the enthusiasm of his feelings, "believe me, my generous preserver, I will not leave you; when Hemelfride pours out her whole heart, when she whispers the tale of smothered love, I will watch your features, and from their expression, guess her chance of happiness. Yet think not my friendship, my gratitude, can know an encrease; no, too generous, too disinterested champion of an injured cause! with
life

life alone will my sentiments expire. But not to shield Hemelfride from the dreaded sacrifice of earthly bliss, not to save her from the gloomy grave of hope, would I behold her the bride of humanity and compassion. She too bears in her young heart the seeds of pride, which the privacy of retirement, which the severities of religion, could not smother; she too boasts the influence of honour, the gift of independence: yes, Hemelfride must be loved for herself alone, or Hemelfride, with unmurmuring fortitude, would brave the horrors of monastic gloom, sooner than chain the hand of an engaged heart."

"Does the same romantic enthusiasm dwell in the heart of your sister?" demanded Di Rinaldini; "does the same contempt of danger, the same spirit of independence, guide her actions?"

"Hemelfride's soul would breathe the words I have uttered," replied Isidore.

"Then would I had a heart to offer!" sighed Huberto.

The

The pilgrim mused for a few moments, and then, with the calmness of restored composure, said, "Tell me the extent of the threatened danger; tell me how the tale of my sister's flight reached the deep retirement of Montranzo."

"A lay brother of St. Romuald, newly returned from Fossombrone," replied Di Rinaldini, "is the bearer of the intelligence. He states, that, two days previous to the ceremony of profession, the novice fled from the convent of Corpus Domini, and has, as yet, eluded the most diligent search; nay, 'tis universally reported and believed, that, with the partner of her flight, she has withdrawn from the country, and, in so doing, has escaped the vengeance of the law. Knowing, as I do, that it was a brother, and not a lover, who rescued the persecuted Hemelfride; knowing that she has found but a temporary place of safety; surely, though one mode of service is rejected, I may hint my fears, lest an incautious word, lest an incautious look,
from

from her brother, should betray his knowledge of the secret. The sojournment of a stranger at the Castle is known to the Camaldoli brotherhood: the necessity of your caution, in so carefully secluding yourself at Montranzo, is now obvious; I thought it misplaced, but I now acknowledge it prudent. Father Luitfrido you have never seen, Father Brazilio seldom."

"I have seen him but once," replied the youth, "and that was but a casual interview—I met him in crossing the east hall: he gave me his benediction, and departed; but, in that casual interview, I marked a scowling glance from his dark hollow eye, which imparted more than his lips uttered. I have heard he was the bosom-friend of the Conte Alverani."

Huberto started: he looked attentively at the speaker.

"That he instigated his every action,"
VOL. II. K. pursued

pursued Isidore ; " nay, that his patron's wishes were subservient to his commands. I have heard likewise, that, in the infant dawn of love, he was an enemy to your hopes. Do you think him changed, Signor ?"

" Changed !" repeated Di Rinaldini ; " wherefore the question ?"

" 'Tis true, my mind teems with suspicion," rejoined the youth ; " yet, in the accidental meeting of a moment, methinks I decyphered more than common passions. The monk no doubt was spurred on by some concealed motive : may not that motive still exist ?"

" Heaven knows !" said Huberto thoughtfully : " I fear he is not a friend ; yet I know not why he should be an enemy. He left me to the corroding melancholy of my own reflections, and for weeks, because I yielded not to his project of taking the cowl, entered not the Castle."

" The cowl !" exclaimed Isidore, laying his

his hand impulsively on the arm of Di Rinaldini; "did you, do you ever breathe a desire so repugnant to nature?"

"Never for an instant," he replied; "no, not in the acutest paroxysms of anguish: how then can I, when the partial hand of Heaven, taking compassion on my solitude, has sent you, my friend, to revive my drooping spirits, to cheat my thoughts from woe, to sooth me into comfort?"

A rosy blush mantling the features of Isidore, sparkled in his eyes; timidly he withdrew his hand from the arm of Huberto, timidly his lips repeated *comfort*; and as he smothered an intruding sigh, as he stole a sidelong glance at the speaker, he started; for, at the door, he beheld the monk Brazilio, his cowl but partly shadowing his countenance, and his eyes stedfastly rivetted on himself.

"Methinks," ironically remarked the friar, "'tis a young comforter."

"But a true friend, father," said the youth.

"I hope so, boy: hypocrisy, in years so tender, I should conclude an indication of every other crime."

"True, father," firmly rejoined the pilgrim: "yet surely hypocrisy in age must be a crime more heinous, for, in all human foresight, the hours for repentance are more circumscribed."

"In age or in youth," exclaimed the confessor, "'tis condemned of Heaven.—But wherefore, may I ask, do you tarry thus long at Montranzo? Your cockleshell and staff speak your vocation; to what shrine does your pilgrimage bend?"

"My pilgrimage," falteringly articulated Isidore, "has stopped at the shrine of gratitude."

The monk smiled.

"Say rather," interrupted Di Rinaldini,
"influenced

"influenced by feeling, 'tis an offering made to compassion."

"And to *virtue*?" pointedly demanded the confessor.

Huberto looked inquisitively towards him; while the youth, struggling with pride and confusion, turned hastily to the window.

"Compassion," remarked Di Rinaldini, "is a prominent character in the list of virtues."

"And humanity," exclaimed Isidore, his full heart beaming in his eyes, "a blessed incentive of Heaven.—Father, you mistake; austerity may command forbearance, may enjoin restriction; but nature requires not such sacrifices."

"Nature, boy, nature," pursued the monk, "is the enemy I would curb: yield to nature, and her locust-herd of followers, sensibility, sentiment, and love, subdue the powers of resistance, and undo the soul.

That blush marks my statement just : as yet, you are a novice——”

The youth started, and the blush vanished.

“ In disguise,” continued the friar, “ and unacquainted with the dangerous tendency of compassion. What I call rashness, you denominate magnanimity ; what I call fortitude, you style stoicism : nature is a rock of destruction to heedless youth. Possibly the wretched fugitive from Corpus Domini ascribes to nature her errors and her ingratitude.”

“ Ingratitude, father !” repeated the unguarded Isidore ; “ does self-preservation merit the term ingratitude ?”

“ Self-preservation,” echoed the monk, and again his searching eye called up the quickening blush.

“ Possibly,” said Huberto, glancing at the pilgrim a look importing caution, “ Father Brazilio’s information may be
more

more correct than ours. We have heard that the novice is young and friendless; that, unwilling to renounce a world but too alluring, she fled to avoid the compulsory ceremony of profession, which, regardless of her resistance, had been enjoined. Surely, thus driven by the coercion of power, she deserves not the black imputation of ingratitude."

"She was not friendless," replied the monk; "the condescending clemency of the most holy superior had been a mother to her infancy; and the tender, the affectionate, the united sisterhood, had been subservient to her caprices."

Isidore raised his eyes to heaven.

"To rob time of its languor," continued the monk, "they taught her every female accomplishment the duty of their sacred station would admit: the young hypocrite could touch the lute, and, from the organ, could draw forth the sweetest tones of melody."

lody. But mark her return for kindness: she fled from Corpus Domini, because the Lady Abbess, interested in the welfare of her soul, sought, by removing it from the danger of corruption, to ensure it the bliss of paradise; she fled, because the holy vocation of a nun accorded not with the *feelings of nature*; she fled, because flattery had poured its baleful poison in her ear, because love had jaundiced the future colours of her fate."

" Might not unprejudiced reflection, might not cool unimpassioned reason, have swayed her actions?" enquired Isidore: " Is love the magic spell of every decisive measure?"

" Yes; when once it has gained entry in the youthful heart," replied the monk, " it corrodes, it rankles; it subverts the dictates of argument, it influences the motives of action."

" And does it murder peace?" asked the pilgrim, his countenance assuming the stamp of mournful sadness, and his eyes
bending

bending towards the ground ; "say, does it always, and for ever, wreck the happiness of its votary ?"

"It is for you to solve that question," emphatically observed the confessor.

"Me, father ?"

"Yes, you, my son : I have outlived the force of passion, have forsworn its thrilling ecstasies ; you are bursting into life, with all its rosy hopes, its rich expectations, courting enjoyment : the germ of *gratitude* has, ere now, sprung into *love*."

Isidore buried his burning face in the folds of his habit, while Dr Rinaldini warmly demanded an explanation of his words.

"My words are as my calling, plain and unsophisticated," calmly replied Father Brazilio—"In the agitation of your youthful guest, methinks I can discern the seeds of passion : his ready acquiescence in your wish for his continuing at Montranzo, not-

R 5 withstanding

withstanding its solitude and its gloom ; above all, his constant seclusion within its walls, even when the voice of friendship and the call of curiosity beckon him to visit the surrounding grandeur of creation's beauties, betray that some concealed impulse influences his actions ; and when I survey your domestic establishment, when I look at the pretty, innocent, blushing Vannina, that impulse stands revealed."

The cloak dropped from the hand of Isidore ; he looked towards the speaker, not with the sweet expression of his native placidity, but with distrust and indignant pride: 'tis true, he breathed freer ; but when he met the eye of friendship inquisitively resting on him, his agitation returned, and his sickening heart loathed the attentions of Vannina. Short was the lapse of gratitude, short the perversion of feeling : he perceived not the departure of Father Brazilio ; yet, ere he could have descended to the hall, he remembered the kindness

kindness of the unoffending girl,' and condemned his want of gratitude.

"Isidore," said Di Rinaldini, taking the trembling hand of the youth, "am I to credit the conclusions of Father Brazilio? Is Vannina the happy object of your solicitude?"

"*Happy!*" eagerly repeated the pilgrim; "would you think her *happy?*"

"Yes," mournfully; "the chosen object of a heart like yours, must be happy."

"Blessed Virgin!" yielding to his feelings; but, instantly recovering himself, he added—"Then Vannina is *not* happy; no, Signor, Vannina is *not* the chosen possessor of my heart."

"Your words tacitly acknowledge it to be possessed: if so, wherefore do you linger at Montranzo?"

Isidore clasped his hands, and sighed.

"I feel strangely interested in your fu-
ture

ture fate," pursued Huberto: "tell me, is it in the compass of my ability to remove the seeming cloud which hangs upon your spirits, to restore your mind to serenity?"

"Till I entered Montranzo," replied the youth, "misery, care, and apprehension, marked my daily thoughts, my nightly visions; since I have become its inmate, peace, quiet, and security have succeeded: what then but friendship can my heart picture?"

"Such once were my feelings," exclaimed Di Rinaldini; "and yet that friendship changed its colour, that friendship ripened into love.—You weep; ah, surely your sensitive heart too deeply imbibes the sorrows of my fate! You tremble, you turn away your face. Isidore, my mind boasts a strength I once thought it never more could have possessed: to talk of Adelheida, calls not forth the agonizing burst of grief; rather does it sooth the pang of recollection, for time has softened it into melancholy. Ah! why that look?"

it

it seems to pronounce the name of *Hemelfride*!—Alas, my friend, my feelings cannot bear reproach! Had you yielded to my suggestions, Adelheida should have been heard of no more; but, in your sister's name, you rejected my proposal, and restored to my heart the privilege of sorrow."

"Would Hemelfride have robbed it of its sorrow?" eagerly interrogated the pilgrim.

"Hemelfride would have banished complaint," said Huberto.

"But the smothered woe," concluded Isidore, "would have consumed in secret."

Di Rinaldini replied not.

"It would have corroded the stream of life," mournfully continued the youth, "and turned all the gay expectations of a sanguine mind, to bitterness and disappointment."

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.



Ah me! for ought that ever I could read,
Could ever hear, by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.

SHAKESPEARE.

"ISIDORE," said Vannina, who, having vainly sought him below, had stolen up the turret staircase, and softly opened the door of his chamber, "you are always so intent upon your studies, one would swear your heart owned no passion but the love of improvement."

"And what passion can be more desirable?" demanded the youth, hastily depositing the exuberant sketches of fancy in a portfolio.

"Stay,"

"Stay," said Vannina; "let me look at that beautiful landscape, and that portrait—the saints keep us! if that portrait isn't the very image of—of—why, sure, I have seen that face—of—in the dress of a sister of Corpus Domini too; and this is——"

"Unfinished," interrupted Isidore, eagerly snatching the outline of a miniature.

"Well, but it is to be finished; and then who is it intended for?"

"No matter. Fancy," hesitating, "sometimes takes strange flights."

"True; but fancy could not give you such a becoming bloom: I declare, Isidore, I never saw a girl so sweetly painted!"

"Fancy," observed the youth, averting his eyes, "possesses a sway unlimited; she dives through the mists of impossibility, and lightens up fresh vigour from the fire of enthusiasm. Oh!" raising his dark eyes to heaven, "she cheats life of the pang of endurance, and ameliorates the sharpest throes

throes of anguish, by picturing bliss unseen."

"Yet sometimes," archly observed Vannina, "she poisons joy by the anticipation of evil: 'tis like a slumbering dream of Heaven, which dissolves but to show the earth more sterile. I never found fancy make me happy; no, nor soften one sorrow, nor surmount one difficulty."

"You are no visionary, Vannina."

"No, I'm a very mortal, and would give the world to know how you could have taken the picture of a nun of Corpus Domini."

"'Tis a large pledge," replied the pilgrim, smiling; "but is it not possible to dress a picture in a religious order without having a model? Remember I have told you, the flights of fancy are unlimited."

"Ah! but fancy could not so exactly have copied the habit."

"In my visits to the grate," said Isidore; "Hemelfride was not always alone."

"No."

"No, poor soul!" exclaimed Vannina;
 "I warrant me she was too closely watched.
 I remember when I was at Corpus Domini,
 the very shadow of a man was enough to
 set the whole community in an agitation;
 and no wonder; Mother of God! saving
 my poor old father, my uncle, the gar-
 dener, and the holy confessor Ignatio, the
 whole years I was a prisoner, I beheld no
 living creature but the sisterhood. Often
 have I laughed at the ideas I then formed
 of the world; though, if I expressed a
 wish to see it, the nuns called me profane
 and sensual, and bade me read the lives of
 the saints, or tremble at the fate of sister
 Philippina. Did you ever hear the young
 Hemelfride speak of sister Philippina? She
 was made a nun by force, as it were; and
 then broke her vow, and dared to be
 happy."

"Happy!" mournfully sighed Isidore;
 "alas! short, transient, was the reign of
 her happiness!"

"You know her story then?"

"I have

"I have heard the outline, but no more."

"She was thrown into the condemned chamber," rejoined Vannina, "and there kept till death relieved her misery."

"Merciful God!" ejaculated Isidore, "could religion require an expiation so dreadful?"

"It was the known punishment of a dereliction from the prescribed rules of the order; and every victim knows the penalty before she is professed."

"True," said the youth; "but Philip-pina was dragged murmuring, resisting, to the altar; the seal of fate was stamped upon vows her lips refused to pronounce."

"But still she was a nun," observed Vannina—" 'Tis a dismal sight to see the ceremony of profession, to hear the psalmody of the sisters, and the *memento mori* of the holy Abbess. Never shall I forget when poor sister Cleanthe took the veil; it was soon after, my entrance into Corpus Domini. She came, heart-broken, desponding, into the convent, and commenced her
novitiate,

novitiate, because she believed her lover faithless. Poor sufferer ! it was her trusted friend, and not her lover, who was faithless. The treacherous wretch loved the youth herself, and poisoned all the sweet intercourse of affection, by turning confidence into suspicion, and regard into jealousy. Oh ! 'tis a woful tale ! She was so young, and so pretty, and looked so like a lamb in her snow-white robes !—Her steps were supported by two of the nuns, for she tottered more than walked ; and yet her cheeks were tinged with the sweetest bloom, and her eyes sparkled with a fire emitted by desperation. With thoughtful trepidation she moved up the choir ; she cast a timid look to heaven, as she passed, as it were, from life to death, and bowed her devoted head to receive the black veil, destined for ever to conceal her outward form, though, alas ! little capable of allaying her inward feelings. The enthusiasm of her character preserved her spirits and her fortitude during the melancholy

choly ceremony ; but when restored to solitude and reflection, when the necessity for exertion was passed, and the long prospect of negative existence pressed on her tortured brain, she yielded to all the anguish of despair, to all the bitterness of misery. Unknown to the Lady Abbess, I stole into her cell ; I strove to pour consolation into her bleeding heart ; but the effort was vain—she looked at the golden locks which the fanaticism of religion had severed, and burst into tears—‘ Ah, God!’ she murmured, ‘ what have I done?—Wretched, lost Cleanthe, the colour of fate is changed ! Thy love is become criminal, thy sighs are tinged with the baleful poison of destruction : precipitancy has awakened the denunciation of Heaven ; for have I not forsworn the world ? yet still its ardent wishes linger ; have I not vowed to immolate every passion at the altar of profession ? yet still am I the sport of feeling.’”

“ Unfortunate Cleanthe !” sighed Isidore:

“ Ah !

“ Ah ! but the award of sorrow was not then accomplished,” resumed Vannina—
“ listen to the conclusion of her woes. In vain remorse pictured the sin of indulgence, in vain she struggled to surmount the tender, yet all-subduing, enthusiasm of love : at night, repentance led her to the chapel—expiation banished the season of repose ; but in the short, stolen triumphs of nature, when sleep conquered the vain resistance of piety, fancy played truant, and revised the era of her former joys—fancy passed the grated barrier of her prison, and divested her of the gloomy habiliments of slavery.”

“ Surely Cleanthe must have been a zealot,” interrupted the pilgrim, “ or the involuntary trespasses of imagination would not have demanded an atonement so rigorous.”

“ Cleanthe’s vows were not compulsory,” replied Vannina, “ but the free-will offering of what she considered piety—what proved despair. In the hours of preparatory

paratory communion, she thought every sensual wish expunged, because outraged tenderness and warring pride banished the softer feelings of the soul, and urged revenge; she thought the ardour of prayer sufficiently strong to curb the wild flights of imagination, and ensure the reign of enthusiasm: but, alas! scarce a month elapsed, when the discovered treachery of her friend, the known constancy of her lover, shewed the feeble tenure of her reliance; a letter, couched in the strong language of passion, betrayed their undoing, and stamped her future fate in the black die of misery. The whole scheme of iniquity was disclosed, but disclosed too late—the ingratitude, the perfidy of a trusted friend, had dried the sources of sensibility, had turned all to madness and distraction. Unhappy Cleanthe! long, raving beneath the burning fever of delirium, was she dead to every accent of compassion, to every effort of friendship.—Another letter arrived at Corpus Domini, but that letter contained

contained reproach: the ill-fated lover had learned the indissoluble barrier that treachery had interposed to happiness, and every sentence breathed horror and despair. He said, that religion alone withheld his arm from aiming the blow of self-destruction; that he could not long survive the loss of Cleanthe; that, flying to France, he should enter a volunteer into her army, hoping that, in the heat of battle, the pangs of memory, and the torture of the heart, would alike be silenced. The Lady Abbess repressed that letter: alas! it could not have encreased the misery of Cleanthe's fate—she never smiled again, she never raised her head in gladness: reason, once fled, regained not her empire; a dejected, harmless maniac, she wandered among the gloomy cloisters of the monastery, the lovely emblem of human weakness, the unconscious claimant of pity. Sometimes she would breathe the sad tale of her calamity; sometimes she would dwell upon the name of her lover, in accents so wild,

so

so plaintive, so woe-begone, that the eye of religion's self would shed the tear of sympathy, and turn even the heart of bigotry to compassionate a destiny so hopeless; sometimes, all soul, she would talk of a future state; and then again relapsing, tear off her veil, abjure her vows, and ask for her wedding-garments."

"Merciful God!" articulated Isidore, "can love so undermine the seat of reason, so overthrow the powers of the soul?"

"Love can do any thing," softly observed Vannina.

The pilgrim heeded her not—"Surely, surely," he continued, crossing his hands upon his bosom, "mortality exhibits not a scene so desolate as the wreck of the human mind!"

"And yet they say, to be mad is to be happy," exclaimed Vannina.

"Happy!" repeated Isidore, fearfully starting; "happy! was Cleanthe happy?"

"No; but she was melancholy mad."

"Poor sufferer!" murmured the youth

—"Proceed

—“ Proceed with your story, Vannina: Cleanthe, you say, would abjure her vows, and ask for her wedding garments.”

“ Yes,” resumed Vannina; “ and then she would gather cypress and rue out of the convent garden, and bind them on her temples; but missing her fine long hair, she would sit down and weep. There is a Parian shrine near the altar, in the chapel of Corpus Domini, erected to commemorate the sainted foundress: well, this shrine poor sister Cleanthe fancied the grave of her lover—there she would linger, there she would pour forth her woes; and when the shadows lengthened, and the gloom of night enveloped all alike in darkness, she would bathe its stony surface with her burning tears. The hollow sighing of the breeze she imagined the response of affection; and often would she rush with wild joy into the refectory, affirming she had seen the spirit of her beloved, and that he had promised soon to claim her. The holy Abbess and the nuns never restricted her

VOL. II. L wanderings;

wanderings; they knew her to be totally harmless, and permitted her ever to pursue the bent of her sickly fancy. A whole year elapsed, without one ray of sanity shooting through the misty chaos of her maddened brain.—On the anniversary of her profession, long after the nuns had retired from midnight mass, I was awakened by an unusual noise proceeding from her cell. For some time I listened, but no sounds disturbing the death-like stillness which prevailed, I concluded it the heated vision of slumber, and again was composing myself to rest, when a sob, the most piteous I ever heard, dissipated every doubt, and aroused conviction. Instantly I sprang from my pallet, lighted my taper, and hastened to her cell: I found her on her knees, her arms extended, as if to clasp some object, and her eyes wildly wandering around the chamber.—‘Softly, softly,’ she articulated: ‘he has been here, but I was not ready; he chided my delay, but still I could not follow him—he told me
he

he would be my guide to happiness: nay, turn not away, even I, even the wretched, lost Cleanthe, dare picture happiness. See! again he comes!—Oh! how changed!—Where is thy beauty, love? where the radiance of thy health-fraught countenance?—How pale! how comfortless!—cold, cold, cold!—Come to my arms, and I will warm thee; come, feel how my heart throbs—it shall be thy pillow. Off! off! hated barrier!’ tearing aside her veil—‘Now am I free! now can I fly to save thee!’—Instantly every ray of hope vanished, instantly despair the most gloomy hung upon her features.—‘Blessed Virgin! he sinks—he dies! the green waves wash over him.—Ah, God! avert the danger!’—‘Tis too late—the rock is his pillow, the sand is his bed.’—She sprung from her knees, she snatched the taper from my hand, she tottered to the chapel; I followed her, I saw her approach the shrine; every fear vanished; nay, I believe I felt, if the ghost had indeed stood before me, I should have survived it.”

"When the mind is intent upon the performance of a good action," observed Isidore, "there is no room for the weakness of superstition."

"A good action!" repeated the gratified girl; "do you think, Isidore, mine was a good action?"

"It was the impulse of benevolence," replied the youth; "and benevolence is the type of Heaven.—But proceed, Vanina; tell me of the poor Cleanthe, when arrived at the supposed grave of her love."

"She placed the taper by its side," pursued the narrator, "then bent her knees upon its base, and threw her arms around the cold statue, the emblem of Religion taking flight to Heaven. I heard her murmur—'Yes, we shall be united; we shall meet, never more to part. Eternal Father,' her voice gradually weakened, 'compassionate—receive——' It ceased: I saw her feebly recline her head upon the stone; I thought she had fainted—alas! she had died."

Isidore.

Isidore turned aside his head, to conceal his tears.

Vannina, vainly struggling to suppress her sobs, continued—"I called upon her, but she answered not; I touched her, but she moved not: alas, poor soul! she was past the reach of suffering, she was past the reach of sorrow.—My shrieks aroused the slumbering sisterhood, and, in a few minutes, the Lady Abbess and the nuns rushed into the chapel. Trembling, horror-struck, dismayed, I pointed to the departed Cleanthe: her arms still grasped the statue, and her head still rested on the tomb—'She is dead!' I articulated, and then, almost as senseless, sunk upon the pavement. Well, poor sister Cleanthe was buried; her ravings were attributed to insanity, and her story was no longer talked of: but fate works in secret, and time unravels the seeming thread of mystery. In less than a fortnight, intelligence arrived at Corpus Domini, that the lover of Cleanthe was drowned, and drowned on the

very night which closed the sorrows of his hapless mistress."

"Ill-fated pair!" sighed the sympathizing Isidore—"But how was the seeming thread of mystery unravelled?"

"Holy Mary! how can you ask, when you have heard the story? Why, as sure as I have told it, and as sure as conviction is ever brought home to unbelievers, the spectre of the drowning youth appeared to Cleanthe. Didn't she speak of the sea? and didn't she say he was cold, and changed?"

"Hers were the mere ravings of insanity," said the pilgrim, "and owed but to the coincidence of circumstances the slightest shadow of belief."

"And yet they were circumstances which did transpire," rejoined Vannina; "and if, before, I doubted, from that period my belief in spirits has been confirmed."

"Did you ever doubt then?"

"No," crossing herself; "the saints guard us! I was never so impious."

Isidore

Isidore smiled.

"I wish I could inspire you with my faith," resumed Vannina—"Holy St. Benedict! how dreadful it is to see a fellow-creature brave the horrors of purgatory, and call down condemnation!—Why, I suppose, if you were to meet the spirit of my lady mistress, or the monk, coming out of the subterranean——"

"What monk, Vannina?"

"Benevento can better tell you; though," smiling significantly, "I scarce think Benevento would speak to you either, for he goes moping about the Castle, and sighing, and looking so woe-begone, and all because he would keep my smiles to himself. Silly fool! he is jealous of—of—of—Can you guess, Isidore?"

"I fear," remarked the pilgrim, "'tis your conduct which excites his jealousy. Fie, Vannina! 'tis cruel to sport with the feelings of the heart."

"Sancta Maria! my conduct!—no, no;

it is his own presumption. Isidore," softly smiling, "can we check love?"

The youth started; he turned hastily from the searching glance of his companion, and breathed a heavy sigh.

"If we cannot," pursued the disappointed girl, "surely we possess the privilege of choosing its object."

"Caprice and coquetry often wantonly inflict pain, when the heart of a lover merits——"

"Lover!" eagerly interrupted Vannina; "indeed, Isidore, you judge wrong—Benevento is not my lover."

"I am sorry for it," said the youth.

"You sorry!" fearfully—"Mother of God! why are you sorry?"

"Because," he replied, "I think Benevento loves you with an affection which bids fair to last beyond the flower of your beauty; and because I think, in spite of your maiden efforts of concealment, your heart

heart feels, though not acknowledges, a reciprocal flame. Vannina," and he took her hand, and pressed it in the ardour of friendship, "you know not what you do: I could wish to see you happy, I could wish to see you merit happiness."

"Benevento has nothing to do with my happiness," petulantly interrupted Vannina.

Isidore dropped her hand—"But the monk," changing the conversation; "tell me, Vannina, what fresh subject of horror has strengthened your supernatural credence?"

"It is no matter," she sharply replied; "you will but style it superstition."

"I have offended you, Vannina," extending his hand as a peace-offering: "we met in friendship, let us not part in enmity."

"In enmity! Heaven forbid!" and, in an instant, the smile of good nature returned—"It was but last night," she continued, eager to offer atonement for her irritability,

irritability, " that Benevento, in one of his gloomy wanderings, reached the stone passage, at the moment the iron gate of the subterranean opened: he turned involuntarily round, and beheld the tall shadow of a monk stationed at the entrance; the lamp dropped from his hand, and the shadow fled."

" If the door was open, why did not Benevento follow?" enquired the pilgrim; " why did he not exert his courage, and boldly endeavour to solve the mystery?"

" Jesu Maria! follow a ghost!" articulated Vannina—" Why, Isidore, you are learned in every thing but spirits! I have heard they can melt away, and glide through the tiniest, tiniest crevice."

" And yet," interrupted her incredulous hearer, " the gate leading from the subterranean opened, ere the form was admitted. I should not fear to watch this said ghost: mark me, Vannina, if it proves not as substantial as ourselves."

" 'Tis a pity," she sighed, crossing her hands

hands upon her bosom, "that you are an unbeliever: I wish I could share with you my faith, and then we might journey the same road, and—and——"

"And meet in the same place," concluded the youth, smiling at the ardour of her expression.

"Yes," murmured the blushing girl; "'tis sad you should doom your soul to purgatory: I am sure—I believe—I think," hesitating, "it is the only shadow that dims its lustre: 'tis true, the sun has spots, but yet——"

She paused; and Isidore, yielding to a momentary flash of playfulness, exclaimed, "'Tis plain, Vannina, you think your own election certain; though I have heard, presumption is of earthly tenure."

"You mistake my character," Isidore—I am not presumptuous. The saints guard me! manifold are my errors, though vice swells not the catalogue. 'Tis true, conscience acquits me of intentional evil, for I have never injured a human being; but——"

"Then

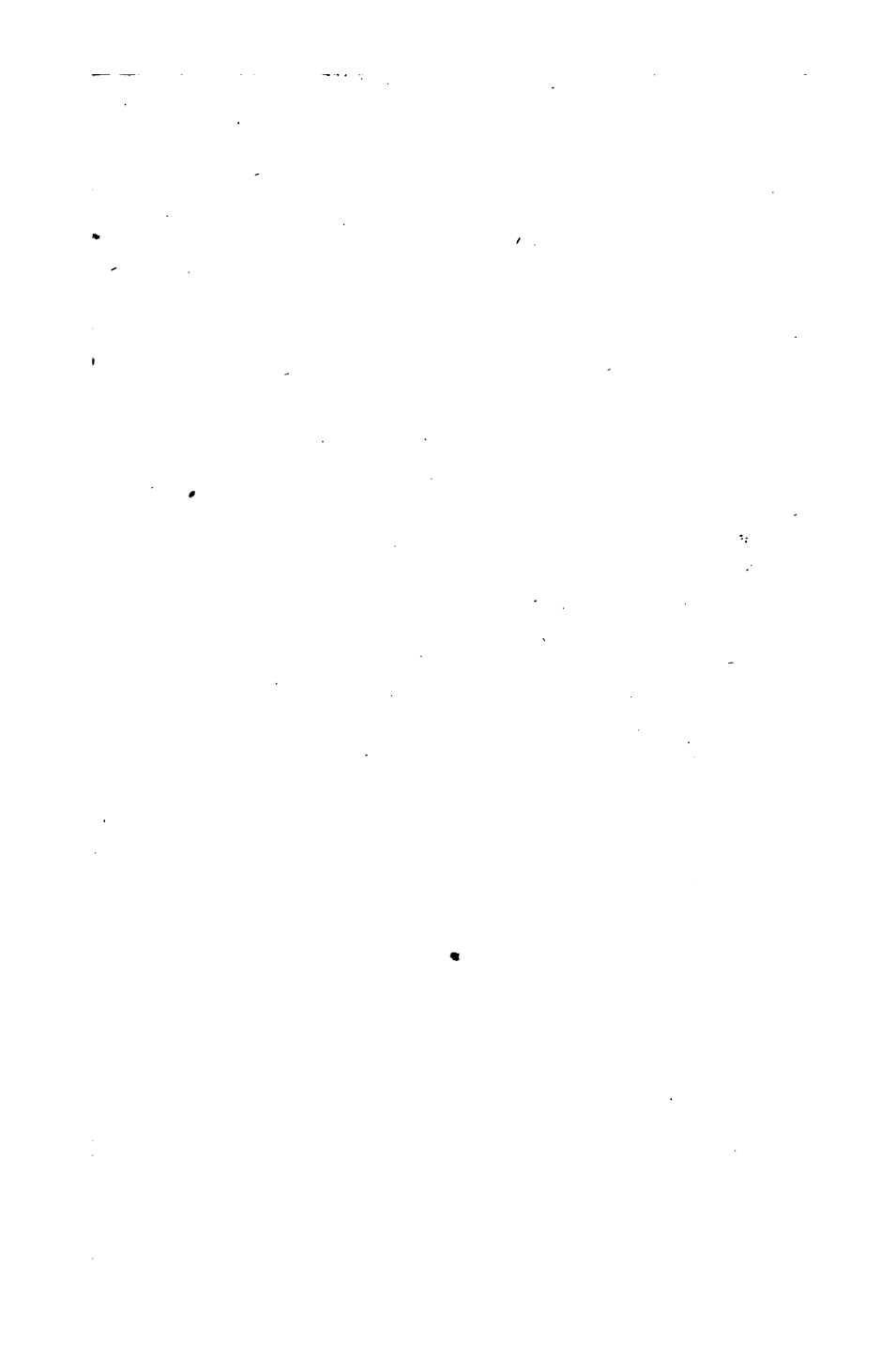
"Then why fear a spirit?" demanded the pilgrim; "why yield to the heated visions of fancy? why listen to the idle tales of superstition?"

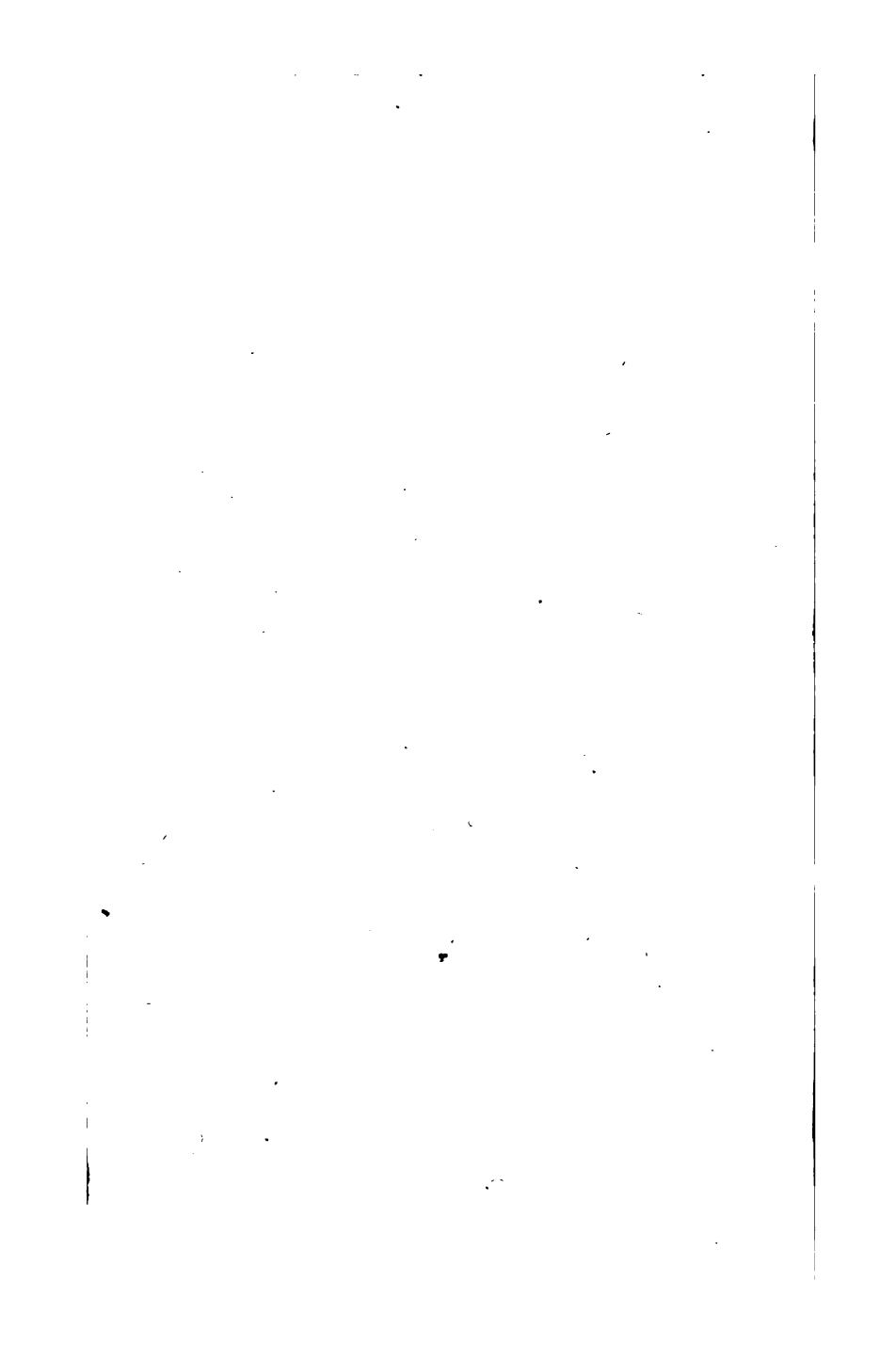
"There is no arguing the point with you," said Vannina, rising to depart—"When last absolved, my confessor warned me to preserve faith."

"And you," thought Isidore, as he heard her descend the turret staircase, "most scrupulously adhere to his injunction."

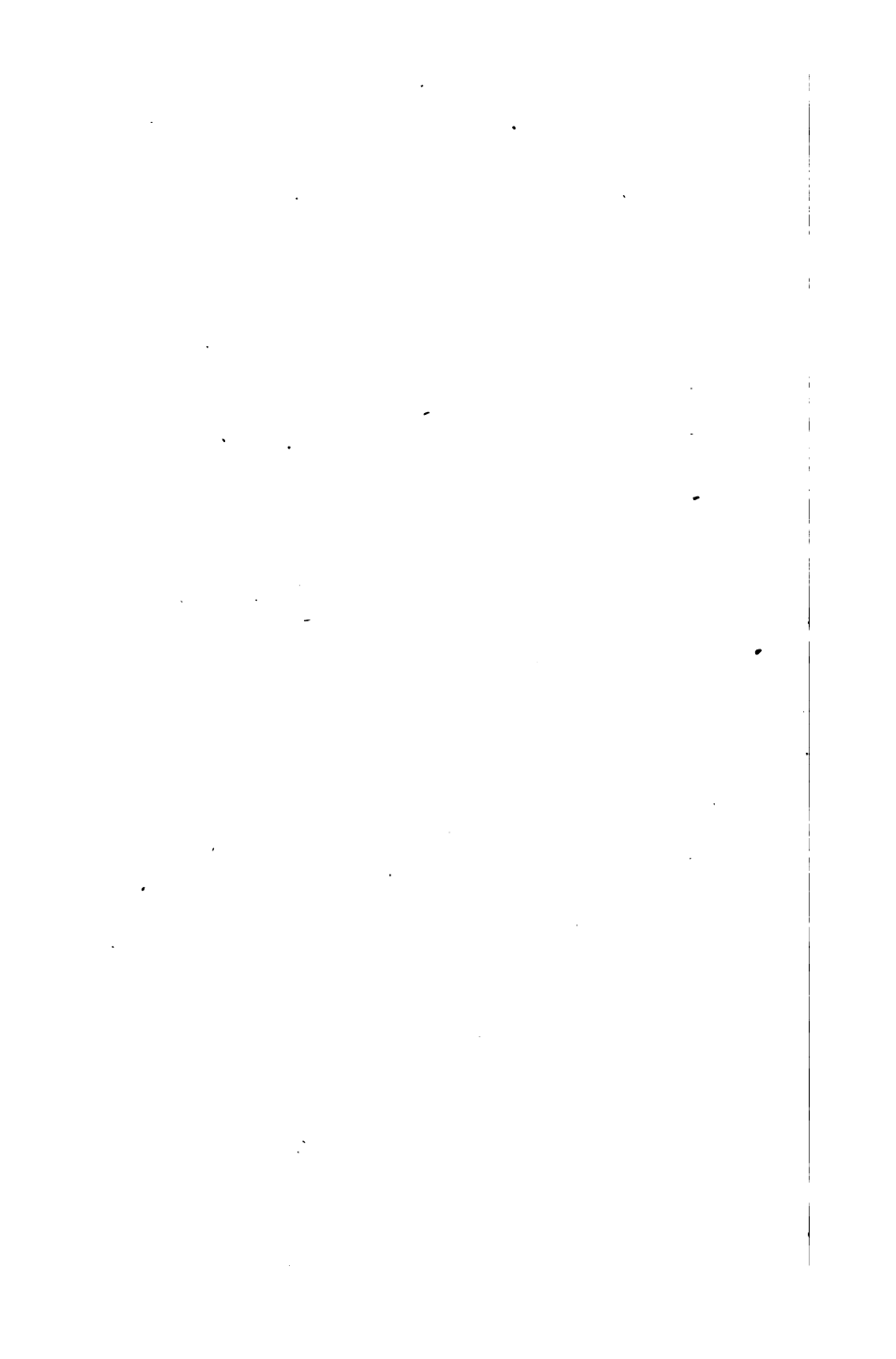


END OF VOL. II.









1

